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Alabama Hills National Scenic Area

Visual Resource Inventory

U.S. Department of the Interior | Bureau of Land Management | Alabama Hills | September 2021

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Cinematic.

Since 1920, Hollywood filmmakers have been drawn to the dramatic beauty of the Alabama Hills. The fantastically shaped landscape has appeared in hundreds of films. They are the sweeping vistas of hundreds of cowboy movies, as well as the setting of modern science fiction films and historical dramas. From How the West Was Won to Tremors, Star Trek Generations to Iron Man, the dramatic Alabama Hills are a star in their own right.

However, this place doesn't just belong to the movies. Hikers, campers, stargazers, and lovers of unique geological formations are drawn to the Alabama Hills, and the Bureau of Land Management is dedicated to the continuing preservation of this incredible landscape.

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Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, CALIFORNIA

Visual Resource Inventory

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACEC	area of critical environmental concern
AHNSA	Alabama Hills National Scenic Area
AHSG	Alabama Hills Stewardship Group
BFO	Bishop Field Office
BG	background (distance zone)
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
FM	foreground-middleground (distance zone)
GIS	geographic information system
GPS	Global Positioning System
IOP	inventory observation point
KOP	key observation point
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NLCS	National Landscape Conservation System
OHV	off-highway vehicle
POP	photo observation point
RMP	resource management plan
SLRU	sensitivity level rating unit
SRMA	special recreation management area
SQFI	scenic quality field inventory
SQRU	scenic quality rating unit
SS	seldom seen (distance zone)
VCR	visual contrast rating
VRI	visual resource inventory
VRM	visual resource management
WSA	Wilderness Study Area

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1.0 — Introduction of Inventory Area

CHAPTER 1:
Introduction of the Inventory Area

1.1 Context of the Inventory Area

The Alabama Hills are located west of the community of Lone Pine in Inyo County, California. The landforms consist of a formation of rounded rocks, eroded hills, and natural arches set adjacent to the jagged peaks of the Sierra Nevada, the arid valley of the Owens River, and the geologically complex Inyo Mountains. The Alabama Hills are uniquely situated near the base of Mount Whitney, the tallest peak in the Lower 48 States and just miles west from the lowest point in the United States in Death Valley National Park. In March 2019, Congress designated the Alabama Hills as a National Scenic Area. The inventory area for this Visual Resource Inventory (VRI) encompasses the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alabama Hills National Scenic Area (Alabama Hills NSA or the Scenic Area), which is managed by the BLM Bishop Field Office (BFO).

The inventory area includes approximately 18,736 acres (99.5 percent) of lands administered by the BLM. The remaining lands not administered by the BLM are made up of Bureau of Indian Affairs lands. The lands in this inventory area contain a variety of scenic landscapes that range from flat shrublands to unique boulder fields and the rugged landforms of the Alabama Hills. The vegetation is predominantly composed of short grasses and shrubs as well as scattered riparian corridors with mature cottonwood canopies. Places to view the scenic landscape within the inventory area include a multitude of cinematic locations, geologic features, and hiking trails.

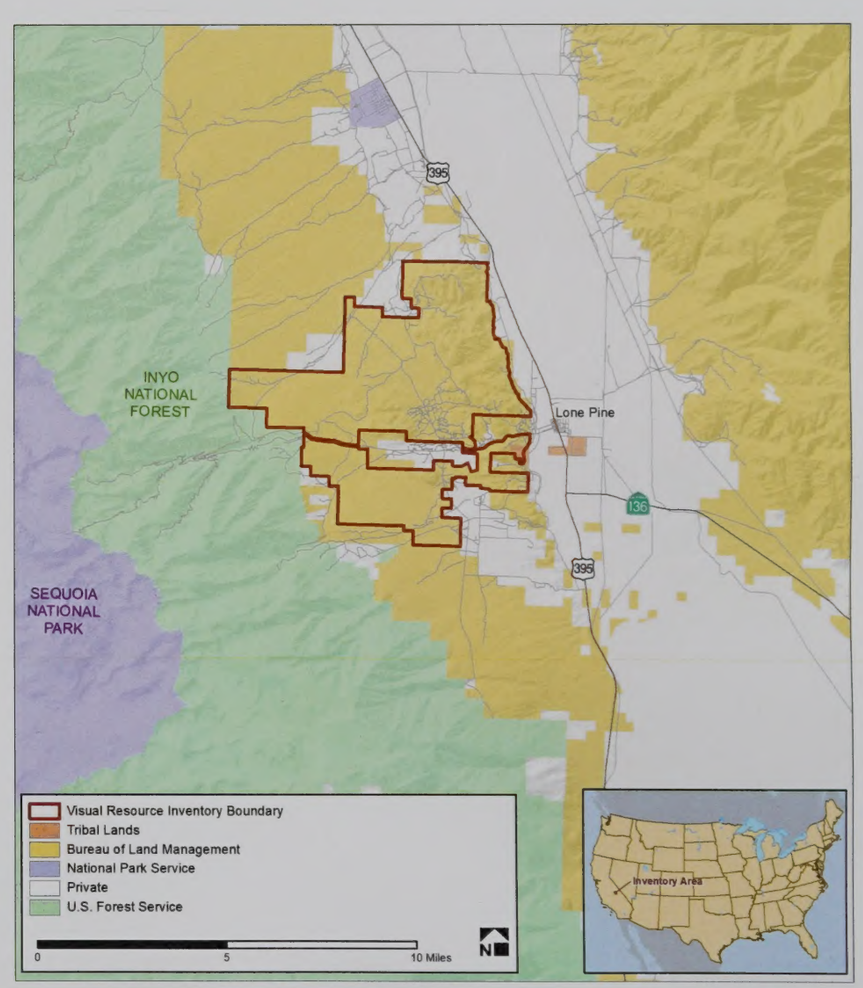


Figure 1: Context of the Inventory Area Showing Adjacent Land Ownership

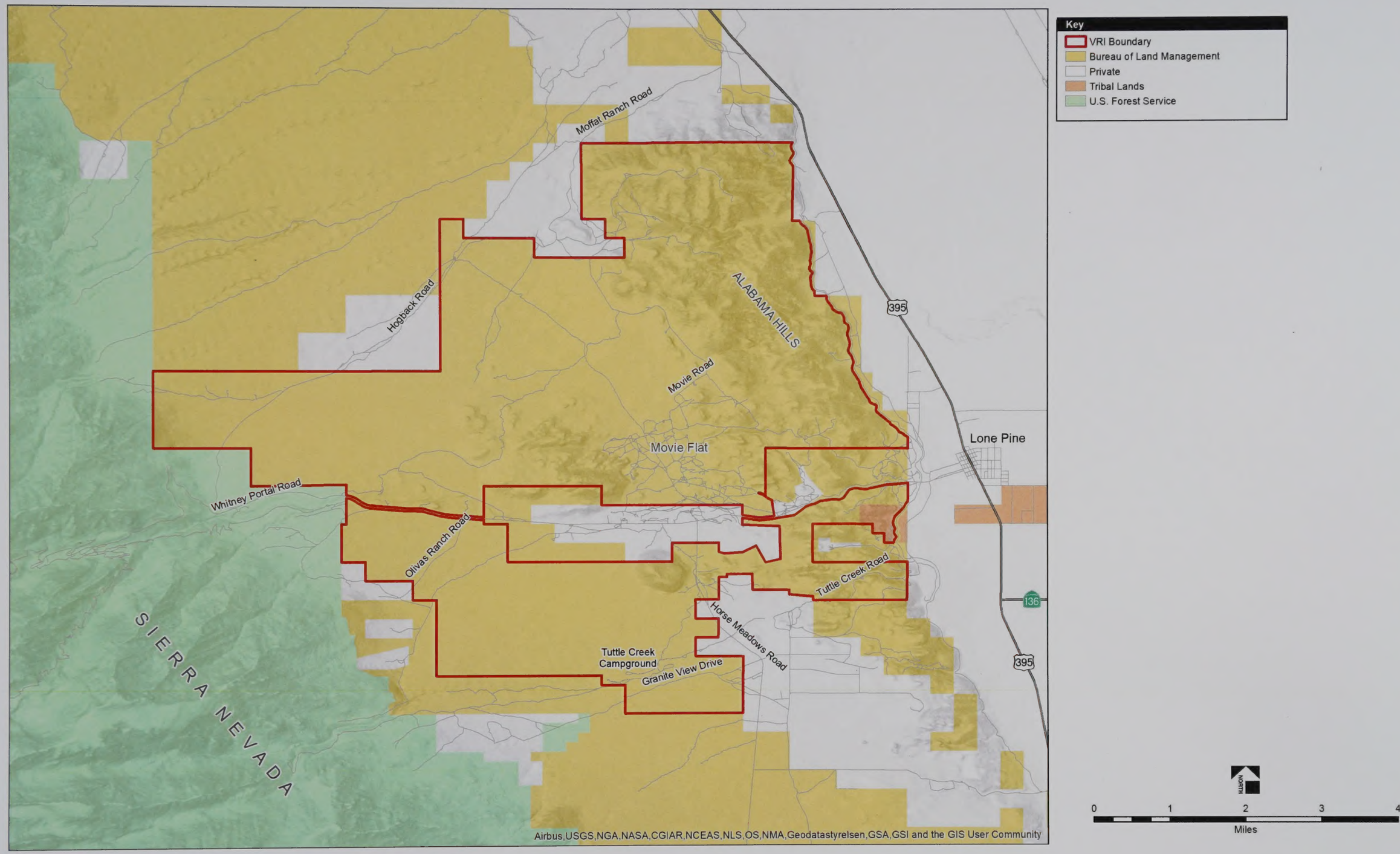


Figure 2: Inventory Area Map

1.1.1. History of the Alabama Hills

The indigenous people of the Owens Valley region have lived in, valued, and used the resources of the Alabama Hills for millennia. Their traditional practices, beliefs and connections to this land continue today. In addition to these uses, the area is also known for its mix of scenic, geological, historical, recreational, and cinematographic resources and values. Beginning in 1920, Hollywood filmmakers began to take an interest in the Alabama Hills for its natural scenery. Since then, over 400 movies have been filmed in the area. Movie stars such as Tom Mix, Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry, and the Lone Ranger, shot it out with outlaws. Classics such as Gunga Din, Yellow Sky, and How the West Was Won were filmed along Movie Flat Road. The 1990 Sci-Fi classic Tremors was filmed almost entirely on location in the Alabama Hills. More recently, Star Trek Generations, Gladiator, Iron Man, and Django Unchained were filmed in the Alabama Hills (BLM 2019).

In 1968, the BLM built the first campground in the Alabama Hills along Tuttle Creek and in April 1969, the BLM California State Director designated roughly 30,000 acres of public land in the area as the "Alabama Hills National Recreation Lands" to protect the area's unique geologic and aesthetic values. Following passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA (Public Law 94-579; 43 USC 1701 et seq.) in 1976, this designation was rescinded and in the early 1980s the area was administratively re-designated as the Alabama Hills Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) (BLM 1990). In 1993, the Bishop Resource Management Plan (Bishop RMP) reaffirmed the Alabama Hills SRMA designation and included direction to protect the area's unique geologic features and scenic values while providing for compatible recreational opportunities (BLM 1993).

The Alabama Hills Stewardship Group (AHSG) was formed in 2006 to promote the protection, conservation, enhancement, and responsible use of the Alabama Hills. To forward their vision for the area, the stewardship group spearheaded a collaborative, grassroots effort among a diverse assemblage of stakeholders to develop legislation that would ultimately designate the heart of the Alabama Hills as an NSA. On March 12, 2019, Title XIV of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Dingell Act (Public Law 116-9)) designated approximately 18,745 acres of public land within the Alabama Hills as an NSA to be managed as a component of the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). The stated purpose of the NSA designation is "to conserve, protect, and enhance for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of present and future generations the nationally significant scenic, cultural, geological, educational, biological, historical, recreational, cinematographic, and scientific resources of the Scenic Area" (BLM 2021).

Today, the BLM manages the Alabama Hills NSA for many recreational uses including sight-seeing, camping, hiking, climbing, biking, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, horseback riding, fishing, birding, photography, and more. The Scenic Area sees an estimated 150,000 visitors per year who flock to the Alabama Hills from all over the country and world to engage in these activities and take in all that the area has to offer.

2.0 — Visual Resource Management

CHAPTER 2:
Visual Resource Management

2.1 Introduction

The BLM has a responsibility to manage the quality of the public lands' visual environment and to reduce the visual impact of development activities. The BLM's responsibilities for scenic values of public lands and the management of the visual environment are established in the following Federal legislations.

- **The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976** requires the BLM to manage scenic values with consideration equal to that given to other resources. This law also requires the BLM to prepare an inventory of the public land visual values and to maintain that inventory on a continual basis.
- **The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969** establishes that it is the Federal government's responsibility to "assure for all Americans safe, healthy, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings" and to include consideration of visual resources in environmental assessments, land use planning decisions, and the implementation of resource projects.

The BLM accomplishes its statutory responsibilities through its Visual Resource Management (VRM) program. The VRM program involves the following three components:

- **Inventorying scenic values** to create a baseline understanding of the existing condition,
- **Establishing management objectives** for allowable levels of modification to the visual environment through the land use planning process, and
- **Evaluating proposed activities** to determine whether they conform to the management objectives using the contrast rating system.

BLM policy and guidance for the VRM program is largely found in the 8400 series of BLM manuals and handbooks (BLM 1984). The VRM program's three components are described in Sections 2.2 through 2.4.

2.2. Visual Resource Inventory—Baseline Condition

Visual Resource Inventories provide nationally consistent data sets that describe the existing condition and status of public land scenic values. The inventory approach is described in BLM Manual H-8410-1 (BLM 1986a). All BLM-administered lands, both surface and split-estate, and landscapes surrounded by BLM lands are inventoried. Exceptions to this include Federal lands managed by other Federal agencies that are outside the BLM's decision area (e.g., national park lands) and/or lands where Federal or State agencies have a scenery management system in place (e.g., National Forest Service). Split-estate lands are those that are owned by States, counties, or private individuals but that are underlain with federally-managed subsurface mineral estate. Though private and State lands may be included in an inventory, the BLM does not establish visual management objectives for those lands.

The VRI identifies and documents the following inventory factors:

- **Scenic Quality**—measure of the relative worth of a landscape's intrinsic natural beauty (e.g., Class A, B, or C quality scenery, with Class A quality scenery having the greatest scenic value)
- **Sensitivity Levels**—measure of public concern for the maintenance of scenic quality (e.g., high, moderate, or low)
- **Distance Zones**—subdivisions of the landscape as viewed from an observer's position (e.g., foreground-middleground, background, and seldom seen)

All lands administered by the BLM are assigned one of four visual inventory classes (Class I, II, III, or IV):

- **VRI Class I areas** are established via policy direction instead of through the inventory process. BLM policy directs that VRI Class I be assigned to areas where a federally binding management decision has been made to preserve or maintain a natural landscape. This includes areas such as Wilderness Areas and WSAs. Nonetheless, VRI Class I areas still need to be inventoried to identify their scenic values and to identify the potential classification absent of the automatic VRI Class I assignment afforded to them by policy. This allows for a thorough understanding of an area's scenic values and aids in analysis should an area's management change and, subsequently, VRI and VRM classes need to be established (e.g., a WSA or portion thereof is released by Congress for consideration as Wilderness).
- **VRI Classes II–IV** are derived through the inventory process using the three inventory factors. Every acre of land administered by the BLM is inventoried. VRI Classes II–IV represent the relative value of the visual resource, with Class II areas having the highest scenic value and Class IV having the lowest scenic value.

The BLM inventories visual resources to provide information about existing scenic values in order to fulfill the NEPA directive to analyze the effects of proposed Federal actions on the human environment. The inventory classes synthesize the three inventory factors to ease the consideration of visual resource values during a land use planning process. In effect, the VRI is used to provide a basis for future management of the visual resources, establish balanced management of visual resources across a planning area, and analyze impacts of proposed projects or activities that could affect visual resources.

2.3. Visual Resource Management in Land Use Planning

Per BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1 (BLM 2005: Appendix C, Section I), VRM management classes are to be designated for all BLM lands based on the inventory of visual resources and management considerations for other land uses. VRM management classes may differ from VRI classes based on management priorities for land uses. They establish objectives for the allowable levels of modification to the characteristic landscape under implementation of a resource management plan (RMP). This level of modification is filtered through the lens of noticeability to the "casual observer" and ranges from changes that do not attract attention to those that are the major focus of viewer attention.

The following are VRM class descriptions from BLM H-8410-1:

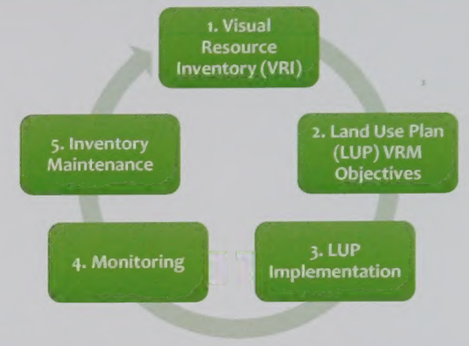
- **VRM Class I**—The objective of this class is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. This class provides for natural ecological changes; however, it does not preclude very limited management activity. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.
- **VRM Class II**—The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
- **VRM Class III**—The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
- **VRM Class IV**—The objective of this class is to provide for management activities that require major modifications of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. Management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repetition of the basic elements.

Assignments of VRM classes during the land use planning process are subject to NEPA impact analysis and public comment. The VRI serves as the principal consideration when making decisions that may protect or affect the landscape character. The inventory factor values are considered in combination (i.e., the VRI class) and independently (i.e., individual factors of scenic quality, sensitivity, and distance zones) when evaluating land use plan alternatives and making RMP decisions. Visual values coexist with and influence other resource values and uses that could be managed in ways that may or may not coincide with the protection of visual values. Decisions on VRM class objectives should result from a coordinated and detailed examination of a range of alternatives that maximize the protection of visual values while also considering other resource needs and land use priorities. Once a Record of Decision is signed for an RMP, the VRM class decisions are fixed and as binding as all other RMP decisions.

VRM class objectives are not the same as VRI classes. VRI classes document value, while VRM class objectives direct management. VRM class objectives may or may not direct management levels that are commensurate with the VRI value. For example, it may be decided that an area inventoried as VRI Class II be managed as VRM Class III due to other desired resource uses, or that an area inventoried as VRI Class IV be managed as VRM Class III due to public preferences and other resource concerns. An update to the VRI does not affect established VRM classes in an active RMP; an RMP amendment would be needed to modify the VRM classes due to an updated VRI.

Visual Resource Management (VRM) System

Provides an orderly systematic way to observe the public lands and classify existing visual resources. Having this system makes it possible to evaluate effects of change.


1. Visual Resource Inventory (VRI)
2. Land Use Plan (LUP) VRM Objectives
3. LUP Implementation
4. Monitoring
5. Inventory Maintenance

2.4. Visual Resource Contrast Rating and Visual Resource Plan Conformance

The Visual Contrast Rating (VCR) system is a systematic process used by BLM to analyze potential visual impacts of proposed projects and activities to determine whether they meet VRM objectives. The system is described in BLM Manual 8431 (BLM 1986b) and takes into account the other two components of the VRM program: the VRI and RMP VRM class determinations.

The VCR system does the following:

- **Analyzes and documents** the degree of contrast that would result from a proposed project or activity in order to minimize adverse visual impacts,
- **Contributes** necessary data to assess conformance with the VRM objectives established in the RMP,
- **Analyzes effects** on VRI factors, and
- **Promotes** the reduction of visual impacts, even in those cases where VRM classes are met.

The VCR system documents how a proposed project or activity would alter features of a landscape (i.e., landform, water, vegetation, or built structures) in terms of their landscape character elements (i.e., form, line, color, and texture). The greater the change causing these elements to be more distinct, noticeable, and unlike the characteristic landscape, the greater the visual contrast.

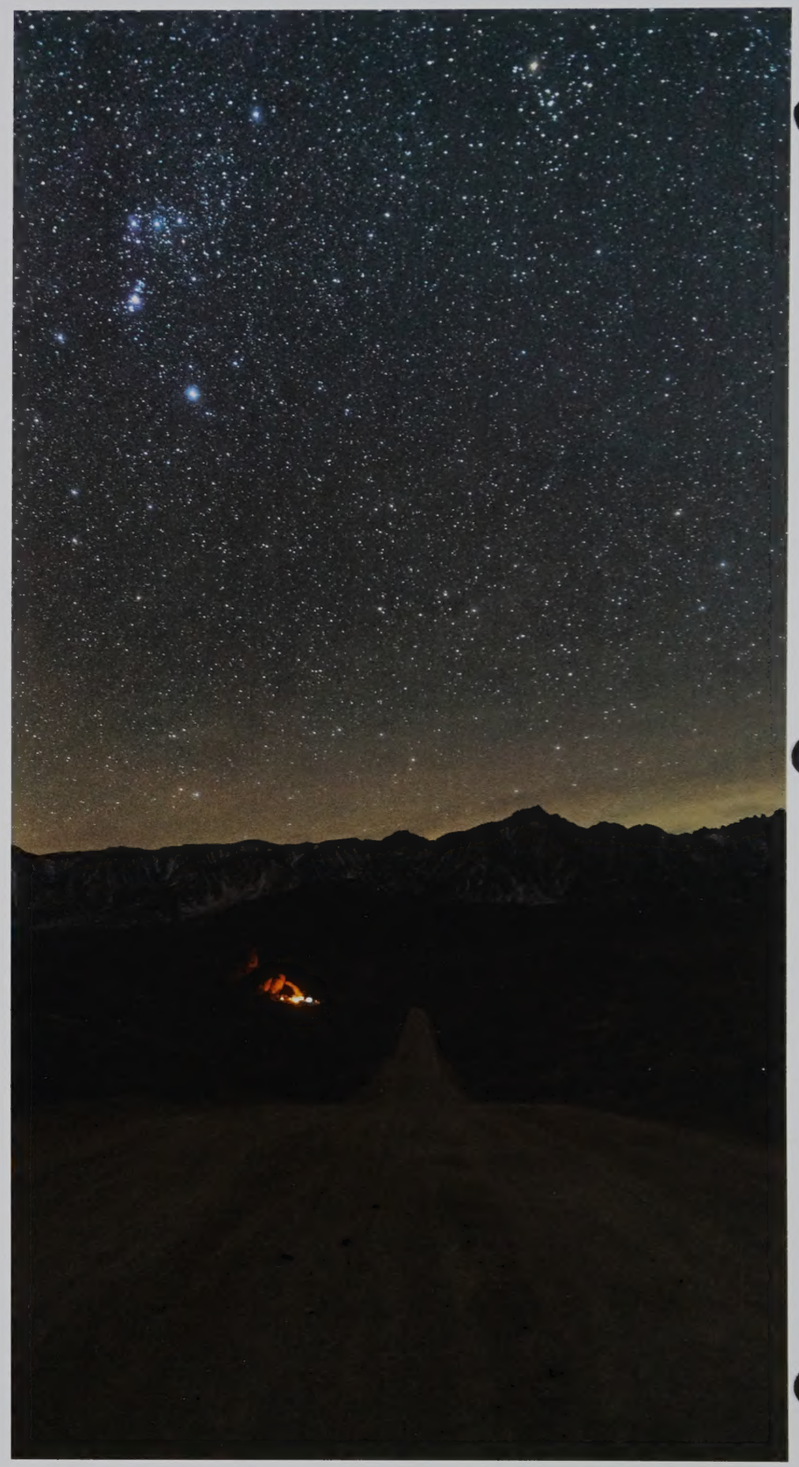
The VCR system documents the following degrees of contrast and determines RMP conformance:

- **None:** contrast would not visible or perceived; meets VRM Class I objectives
- **Weak:** contrast would be seen but would not attract attention; meets VRM Class II objectives
- **Moderate:** contrast would be seen but would not dominate the view; meets VRM Class III objectives
- **Strong:** contrast would dominate the view; meets VRM Class IV objectives

Visual contrast is evaluated and rated from key observation points (KOPs), which are critical viewpoints where the public would commonly see the proposed project or activity. Contrast ratings are determining by considering the following human and environment factors, as noted in BLM Manual 8431:

- Distance
- Angle of observation
- Length of time in view
- Relative size or scale
- Season of use
- Light conditions
- Recovery time
- Spatial relationships
- Atmospheric conditions
- Motion

The results of the VCR system are not only used to determine conformance to VRM class objectives, but can also highlight tangible opportunities to reduce visual contrast by isolating the physical condition that is causing visual attention to be drawn to a proposed project or activity. The VCR system is therefore a powerful tool to identify design solutions that may turn a nonconforming proposed action into a conforming one. By identifying elements of a proposed project or activity that could be improved to reduce contrast, it supports implementation of best management practices for quality built environments on public lands (BLM 2010).



3.0 — Visual Resource Inventory

CHAPTER 3:
Visual Resource Inventory

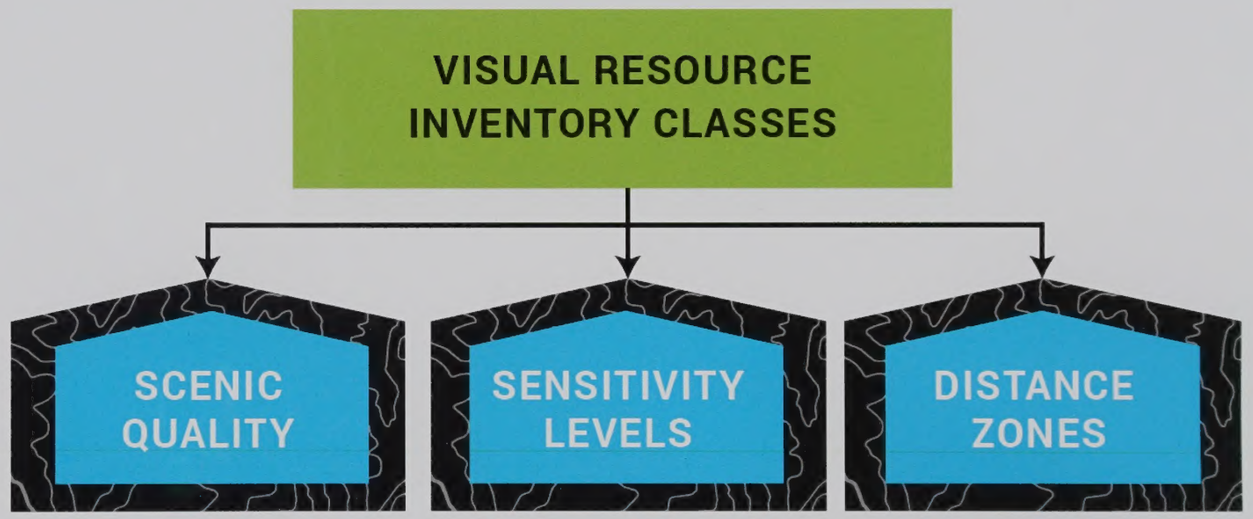
3.1. General Overview

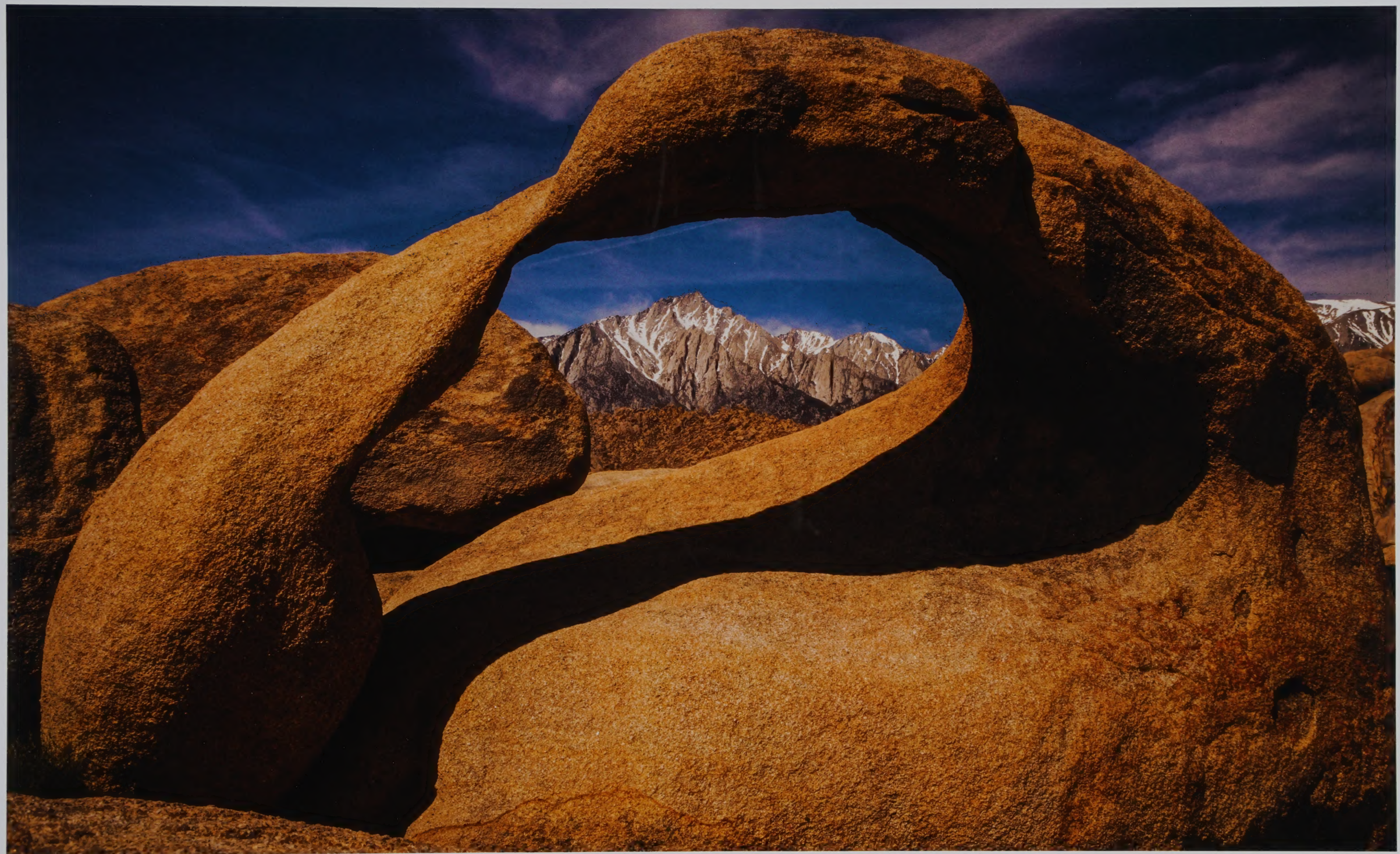
Per the BLM's VRI process, this inventory of visual resources was prepared based on the following three components—each of which is explained in further detail within its respective section of the document:

- **A scenic quality evaluation** to rate the visual appeal of the inventory area based on vegetation, landform, water, color, adjacent scenery, scarcity, and cultural modifications. Scenic quality is rated as A, B, or C.
- **A sensitivity level analysis** to assess public concern of the inventory area's scenic quality and the public's sensitivity to potential changes in the visual setting. Evaluation is based on types of users, amount of use, public interest (local, regional, national, international), adjacent land uses, and presence of special areas. Sensitivity level is rated as high, moderate, or low.
- **A delineation of distance zones** to indicate the relative visibility of the inventory area's landscape from primary travel routes or observation points within the foreground-middleground zone (less than 3 to 5 miles away), background zone (up to 15 miles away), and seldom-seen zone (more than 15 miles away or hidden from view in any zone).

This inventory follows the BLM's National VRI Data Standard and associated VRI Implementation Guide (geodatabase) updated as of August 18, 2010. This ensures that the VRI data is consistent and shareable across the agency, as well as readily available for land use and project planning efforts.

The progression of inventory efforts for this particular VRI is provided in the Process Record (Appendix F).





4.0 — Inventory Factor 1: Scenic Quality

CHAPTER 4:
Inventory Factor 1: Scenic Quality

4.1. Scenic Quality Rating Overview

Scenic quality is a measure of the visual appeal of a tract of land. During the VRI process, lands with similar landscape character are delineated into scenic quality rating units (SQRUs) and given a Class A, B, or C rating based on the apparent scenic quality determined by evaluating seven key factors:

1. Landform
2. Vegetation
3. Water
4. Color
5. Adjacent scenery
6. Scarcity
7. Cultural modifications

During the rating process, each of these factors are ranked in comparison with similar features within the same physiographic province. Field visits and photographic documentation are critical tasks in understanding, evaluating, and documenting a unit's scenic quality. Photographs are taken from several representative locations and used to capture uncommon or noteworthy aspects of a unit.

4.2. Physiographic Province

The Alabama Hills NSA sits within the Basin and Range province at the edge of the Cascade-Sierra Mountains province (Brown 1994) (Figure 3). The Basin and Range physiographic province is characterized by steep, narrow, isolated mountain ranges–generally on a north-south axis–separated by wide, flat, sediment-filled valleys or basins. This province reaches into Oregon and Idaho to the north and extends south through California, Nevada, and Utah and into Arizona, New Mexico, and Western Texas. The resulting topography consists of an interesting mix of rounded rocks, eroded hills, and geologic features such as natural arches and granite spires.

4.3. Delineation of Scenic Quality Rating Units

As part of the VRI workshop Logan Simpson organized and presented for the BLM BFO in January 2020, the inventory team took part in a scenic quality rating workshop that included an overview of scenic quality evaluation, delineation of draft SQRUs, and determination of approximate travel routes and inventory observation points (IOPs). The overview of BLM's scenic quality evaluation process included a review of the guidelines described in BLM H-8410-1. Following the overview, the inventory team reviewed and adjusted previously drafted SQRUs through the use of Google Earth and ESRI ArcGIS software. SQRUs were developed following a general standard of a 200-acre minimum mapping unit. This minimum is used to express the smallest area for the resulting VRI information that the BFO can manage. However, the Tuttle Creek Canyon Unit (#005) is an exception to this as it is smaller than 200 acres, but will be preserved as such, due to its distinctness when compared with the landscapes found in the rest of the Scenic Area.

The data files used during the workshop were developed using geographic information system (GIS) data provided by the BLM BFO and supplementary data from open sources. The inventory team worked collaboratively in the workshop to refine previously drafted SQRUs based on the BLM staff's knowledge of the visual appearance of the landscape. The draft SQRU delineations divided the planning area into units with similar visual characteristics–based primarily on physiographic features; cultural modifications; and similar visual patterns, textures, colors, and variety.

4.4. Inventory Observation Points/Photo Observation Points

Two types of photographs are used to conduct and document the scenic quality of an SQRU:

- **Inventory Observation Points (IOPs)** are photograph(s) from where the landscape can be viewed in order to conduct the scenic quality rating assessment of a given SQRU. IOPs are taken from locations that capture a unit's representative landscape character, not from where the unit is most viewed by the public.
- **Photograph Observation Points (POPs)** are photographs that highlight additional and/or unique elements that add to or detract from a unit's scenic quality.

After the draft SQRUs were delineated, reviewed, and revised by BLM BFO staff, members of the Logan Simpson inventory team used these files to locate preliminary IOP locations using road network data provided by the BLM. Preliminary IOPs were determined based on a variety of factors, including potential visibility of the landscape and the degree of accessibility. The preliminary IOPs were marked in Google Earth to represent general locations from which the SQRUs would be inventoried. These IOP locations were shared with the BFO staff via email coordination for review and approval prior to field inventory efforts.

The scenic quality field inventory (SQFI) was conducted in April 2021. During fieldwork efforts, the team inventoried each of the SQRUs from predetermined IOPs. Because field verification is required to determine the optimal viewing locations for IOPs, exact IOP locations for each SQRU were adjusted based on field conditions and visibility. The inventory team recorded views from the IOPs with a global positioning system (GPS)-enabled digital camera, which recorded geographical locations (latitude and longitude) for each photo. At the inventory team's discretion, additional

POPs were recorded throughout each SQRU to more fully characterize additional and/or unique elements that added to or detracted from the unit's scenic quality. Additional data was also recorded at each IOP/POP to help provide the required data for the BLM's VRI geodatabase. A photo log from the field inventory is provided in Appendix D.

The number of IOPs per SQRU varied according to the size and relative complexity of each unit, as well as the ability to access units in the field due to the limited road network and inaccessibility of certain areas within the inventory boundary. Final IOPs were determined by selecting the locations that are most representative of the unit as a whole (Figure 7). Due to limited access and/or limited views, the IOPs for some units were identified outside the SQRU boundaries (i.e., providing a view into the unit from an adjacent unit). The completed 8400-1 SQFI forms included in Appendix A have inset maps that show which IOPs are associated with each SQRU, as well as panoramic IOP photographs.

4.5. Evaluation Methodology of Scenic Quality Rating Units

Evaluation of SQRUs is documented on the BLM Scenic Quality Field Inventory Form 8400-1 (Figure 5 below, and Illustration 3 in BLM H-8410-1). The first step in evaluating each SQRU is using this form to describe its landform and water, vegetation, and built structures in terms of their landscape character elements (i.e., form, line, color, and texture), as described below.

- **Form**: The mass or shape of an object, or of objects that appear unified.
- **Line**: The path, real or imagined, that the eye follows when perceiving abrupt differences in form, color, or texture, or when objects are aligned in a one-dimensional sequence. Usually evident as the edge of shapes or masses in the landscape.
- **Color**: The property of reflecting light of a particular intensity and wavelength (or mixture of wavelengths) to which the eye is sensitive. It is the major visual property of surfaces.
- **Texture**: The aggregation of small forms or color mixtures into a continuous surface pattern; the aggregated parts are enough that they do not appear as discrete objects in the composition of a scene.

The second step is providing general comments regarding the character, land use, or other aspects of each SQRU in the narrative section of the form. The final step is scoring the seven key scenic quality evaluation factors based on the scales described in the Scenic Quality Inventory and Evaluation Chart (Figure 6 to the right, and Illustration 2 in BLM H-8410-1) and providing an explanation or rationale for each factor's score.

During the rating process, each of the evaluation factors is scored in comparison with similar features within the same physiographic province(s). For the inventory effort, the BLM landscapes were rated in comparison to those in the Basin and Range. Additionally, SQRUs in a given inventory area are not rated comparative to lands only in that inventory area or only to other BLM lands in the given physiographic province, but in comparison with all landscapes in that province.

The evaluation factors are scored on a scale of 1 to 5 with the exception of the cultural modifications factor, which is scored on a scale of -4 to 2, the water factor which is scored on a scale of 0 to 5, and the scarcity factor, which is scored on a scale of 1 to 5+. See Figure 5 for details on how the key factors are rated. For this inventory, scores in increments of 0.5 were recorded. The scores for each factor were then totaled, and a scenic quality rating of Class A, B, or C was determined using the numeric scale on the SQFI form (Figure 4).

While in the field, the inventory team also reviewed the draft SQRU delineations and further refined the boundaries on the field maps. Each unit was given a name that generally reflects landscape features referred to by local residents. One of the preliminary units was split, resulting in a total of five SQRUs (Figures 6). Unit boundaries were subsequently digitized and refined using digital aerial topography to more accurately portray the divisions in landscape character.

All data associated with the scenic quality ratings is included in the geospatial data; narrative portions of the SQRU forms were edited to meet geodatabase letter space limitations.

Figure 3: Physiographic Province Map

Form 8400-1
(September 1985
(Format modified October 11, 2010)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY

Date:
District/ Field Office:
Resource Area:
SQRU #: IOP #:

1. EVALUATORS *(names)*

2. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER *(Feature)*

	a. LANDFORM/WATER	b. VEGETATION	C. STRUCTURE (*General*)
FORM			
LINE			
COLOR			
TEXTURE			

3. NARRATIVE

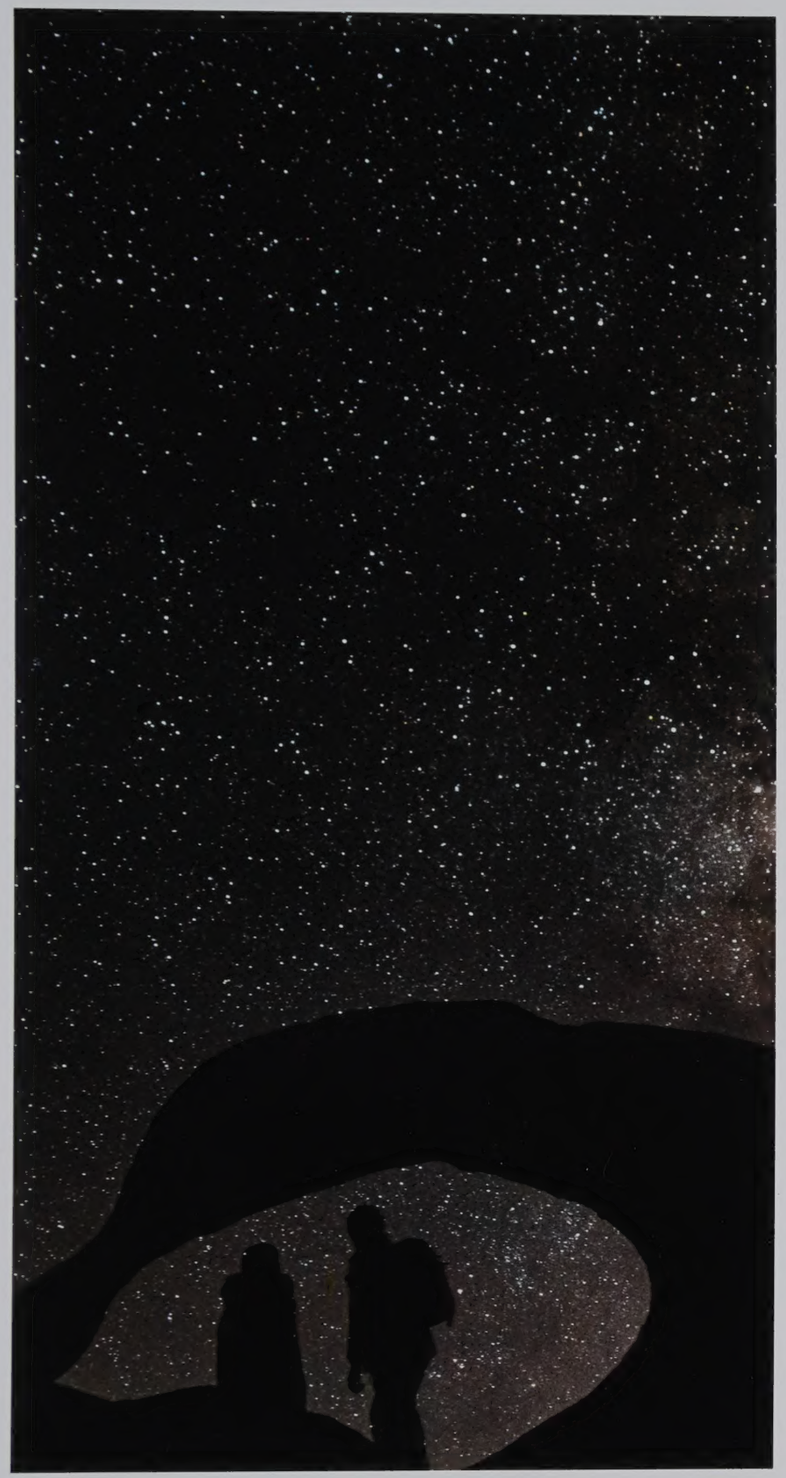
4. SCORE *(Circle Appropriate Level)**

	Rating	Explanation or Rationale
a. Landform		
b. Vegetation		
c. Water		
d. Color		
e. Adjacent Scenery		
f. Scarcity		
g. Cultural Modification		
TOTALS		

SCENIC QUALITY CLASSIFICATION
___ A= 19 or more
___ B= 12-18
___ C= 11 or less

Comments:

Figure 4: Modified SQRU Rating Forms



KEY FACTORS	RATING CRITERIA AND SCORE		
LANDFORM	High vertical relief as expressed in prominent cliffs, spires, or massive rock outcrops, or severe variation or highly eroded formations including major dune systems or detail features dominant and exceptionally striking and intriguing such as glaciers. 5	Steep canyons, mesas, buttes, cinder cones, and drumlins, or interesting erosional patterns of variety in size and shape of landforms, or detail features which are interesting though not dominant. 3	Low rolling hills, foothills, or flat valley bottoms, or few or no interesting landscape features. 1
VEGETATION	A variety of vegetative types as expressed in interesting forms, textures, and patterns. 5	Some variety of vegetation, but only one or two major types. 3	Little or no variety or contrast in vegetation. 1
WATER	Clear and clean appearing, still, or cascading white water, any of which are a dominant factor in the landscape. 5	Flowing, or still, but not dominant in the landscape. 3	Absent, or present, but not noticeable. 0
COLOR	Rich color combinations, variety or vivid color, or pleasing contrasts in the soil, rock, vegetation, water or snow fields. 5	Some intensity or variety in colors and contrast of the soil, rock and vegetation, but not a dominant scenic element. 3	Subtle color variations, contrast, or interest, generally mute tones. 1
INFLUENCE OF ADJACENT SCENERY	Adjacent scenery greatly enhances visual quality. 5	Adjacent scenery moderately enhances overall visual quality. 3	Adjacent scenery has little or no influence on overall visual quality. 0
SCARCITY	One of a kind or unusually memorable, or very rare within region. Consistent chance for exceptional wildlife or wildflower viewing, etc. *5+	Distinctive, though somewhat similar to others within the region. 3	Interesting within its setting, but fairly common within the region. 1
CULTURAL MODIFICATIONS	Modifications add favorably to visual variety while promoting visual harmony. 2	Modifications add little or no variety to the area, and introduce no discordant elements. 0	Modifications add variety but are very discordant and promote strong disharmony. -4

SCENIC QUALITY: A= 19 or more; B = 12-18; C = 11 or less

Figure Source: Adapted from BLM Manual H-8410-1, Illustration 2 (BLM 1986a).

** A rating of greater than 5 can be given but must be supported by written justification.*

Figure 5: Scenic Quality Inventory and Evaluation Chart

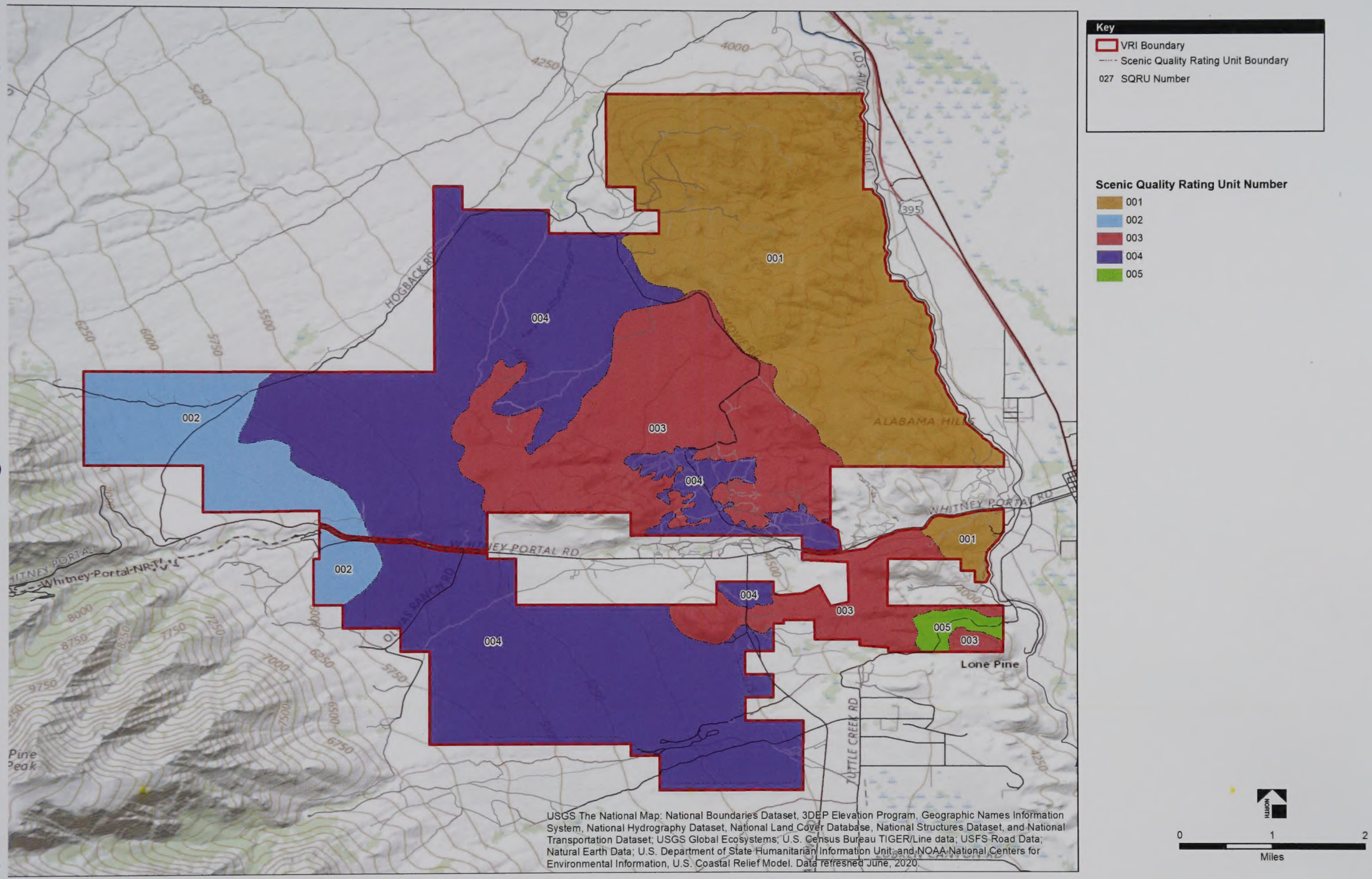

Key
VRI Boundary
Scenic Quality Rating Unit Boundary
027 SQRU Number
Scenic Quality Rating Unit Number
001
002
003
004
005
001
002
003
004
005
HOGBACK RD
WHITNEY PORTAL RD
Whitney Portal NRT
ALABAMA HILLS
Lone Pine
TUTTLE CREEK RD
395
USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset, 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line data; USFS Road Data; Natural Earth Data; U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit; and NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, U.S. Coastal Relief Model. Data refreshed June, 2020.
NORTH
0
1
2
Miles

Figure 6: Scenic Quality Rating Units

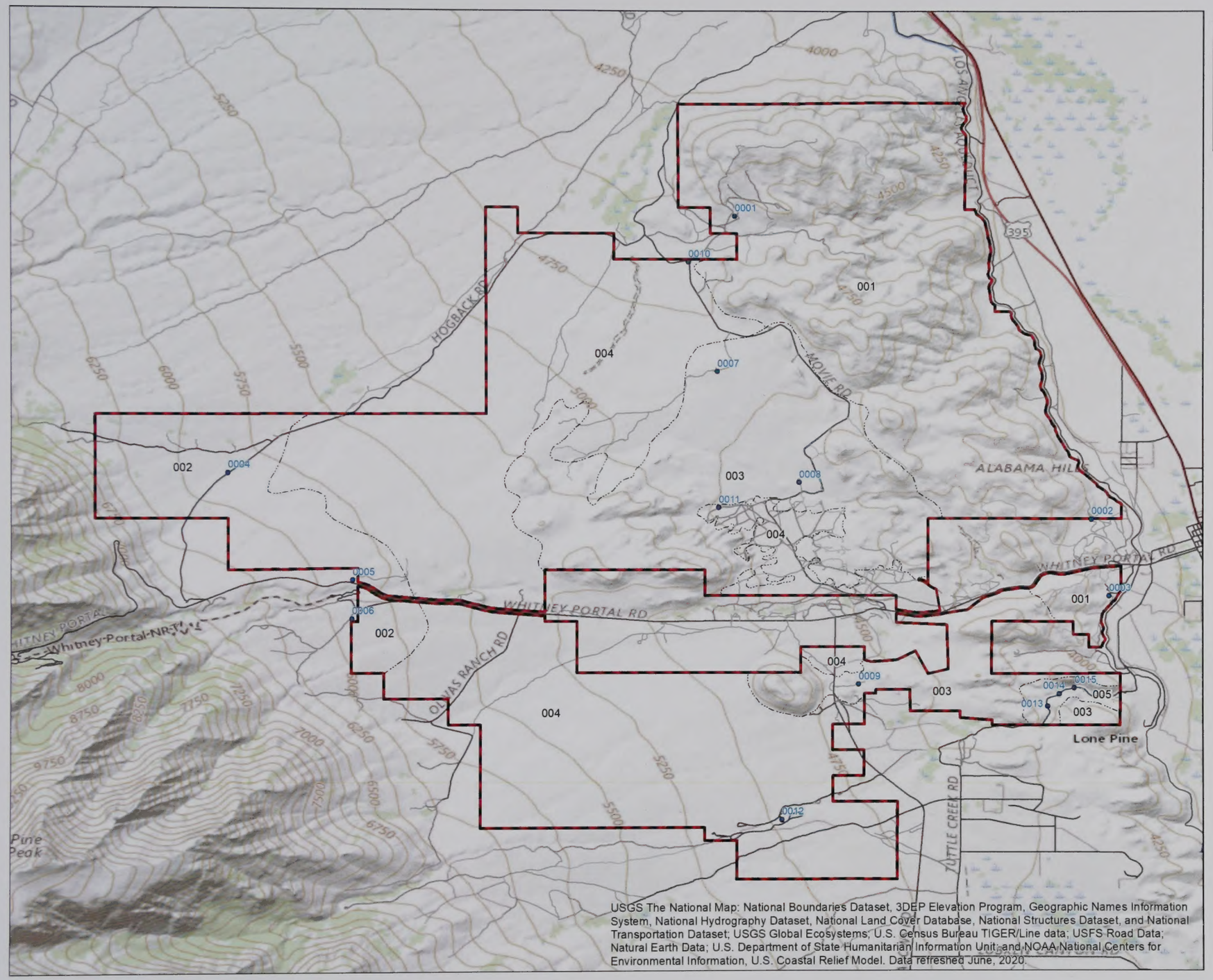


Figure 7: IOP Location Map

4.6 Scenic Quality Summary

Sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2 summarize the overall key factor analysis and the final SQRU ratings and classifications within the inventory area as a whole. Table 1 presents the key factor ratings, the total SQRU score, and the overall scenic quality ratings (A, B, or C) listed in order of rating, and Table 2 presents the same information listed in order of unit number. Maps depicting the key factor ratings and the overall SQRU ratings for the inventory area are presented in Figures 8 through 15.

4.6.1 Key Factor Analysis

4.6.1.1 LANDFORM

Ratings for landform are higher in areas that contain high vertical relief, massive rock outcrops, severe variation, or highly eroded formations, which are scattered throughout the inventory area. Landforms within the inventory area range from flat to rolling shrublands to bold, dominant landforms such as the Alabama Hills and the numerous geologic formations and arches in the Scenic Area. The average SQFI score for the inventory area was approximately 2.9.

In general, the areas with vertical formations have more dramatic topographical relief. The higher degree of vertical relief in these areas introduces interesting shapes and forms into the landscape, which typically become dominating elements. A score of 4.5 was the highest rating and was recorded for the Rounded Rocks Unit (#003).

Landform ratings were generally lower for the shrublands which are more common on the west side of the entire inventory area. These areas consist mostly of flat to slightly rolling terrain, with few interesting topographical features. An SQFI score of 1.0 was the lowest rating and was recorded for the Movie Flat Unit (#004).

LANDFORM

Rounded Rocks Unit
(SQRU #003)

4.6.1.2. VEGETATION

Vegetation ratings are higher where a variety of vegetation types are expressed in interesting forms, textures, and patterns. Across the inventory area, vegetation communities include riparian areas with Cottonwood and willow and expanses of sagebrush, desert shrubs, and grasslands. Vegetation types transition throughout the inventory area based primarily on landforms and availability of water. Units with minimal elevation change and little moisture generally contain less vegetative variety. The average SQFI rating for the inventory area was approximately 2.3.

In areas where vegetative variety is higher, the vegetation creates interesting forms, textures, and patterns. This is particularly true in areas with water features, where scattered and/or clumped vegetation along the riparian corridors increased contrast. A score of 4.5 was the highest rating, which was recorded for the Tuttle Creek Canyon Unit (#005), due to the greater varieties of vegetation, and resulting patterns and textures along the creek.

The flat to rolling shrublands generally received the lowest ratings since they typically include vast stands of grasses and exhibit less variety in vegetative types. A score of 1.0 was the lowest rating and was recorded for two units: the Alabama Hills Unit (#001) and the Rounded Rocks Unit (#003). These units consist predominantly of broad expanses of shrubs and grasses.

4.6.1.3. WATER

Waterbodies within the inventory area are generally limited to Tuttle Creek as well as smaller intermittent streams and drainages. Ratings for water were highest in areas associated with Tuttle Creek. The average SQFI rating in the inventory area was approximately 1.2.

Water was rated highest in the areas where the water is generally visible or flowing and is a dominant factor in the landscape. A score of 3.0 was the highest rating, which was recorded for the Tuttle Creek Canyon Unit (#005).

Units which revolve around the unique landforms of the inventory area (Alabama Hills Unit [#001] and the Rounded Rocks Unit [#003]) received a score of 0.0 because no waterbodies of any form were visible during the field inventory, nor are any known to be present.

4.6.1.4. COLOR

Color ratings are highest in units with rich color combinations, vivid colors, a variety of colors, and/or pleasing contrasts in the soil, rock, vegetation, or water. Vegetative color varies throughout the year with seasonal changes in many locations and complements the landform colors. During the majority of summer and winter, the colors of vegetation are generally muted, but seasonal fall colors are vibrant golds and yellows along riparian corridors and spring colors enhance many areas with vivid greens of new grasses and a variety of colors associated with wildflowers and blooming shrubs. Combined, the patterns and colors of the landforms and vegetative variety create interesting contrasts with the surrounding landscapes. In the inventory area, the highest ratings for color are generally where the vegetation is diverse. Ratings varied throughout the inventory area, with an average SQFI rating of approximately 2.1.

Ratings for color were generally highest in the areas where water led to a variety of vegetation. A score of 3.0 was the highest rating, which was recorded for the Tuttle Creek Canyon Unit (#005) due to the range of colors expressed in the landforms and exposed rocks in contrast with the riparian vegetation.

The lower ratings for color generally occurred in flat to rolling shrublands. Soil colors are generally mute in these areas and vegetative cover consists primarily of yellow/green or grey colored grasses and shrubs. A score of 1.5 was the lowest rating and was recorded for two units: the Alabama Hills Unit (#001) and the Movie Flat Unit (#004).

COLOR

Tuttle Creek Canyon Unit
(SQRU #005)

4.6.1.5. INFLUENCE OF ADJACENT SCENERY

Ratings for adjacent scenery are higher for SQRUs where it greatly enhances visual quality within the unit. Ratings for adjacent scenery were consistent across the entire inventory area due to the major influence of the Mount Whitney and the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the west and the Southern Inyo Mountains to the east. The SQFI rating for adjacent scenery for all five units was 5.0.

INFLUENCE OF ADJACENT SCENERY V

All units scored a 5.0 for Adjacent Scenery

4.6.1.6. SCARCITY

Ratings for scarcity were highest where dramatic or notable landforms or riparian corridors exist in the inventory area. The units that contain landscapes with grasslands, shrublands, and rolling hills are more common to the physiographic provinces and therefore generally received lower ratings. The average SQFI rating for scarcity in the inventory area was approximately 2.4.

Scarcity was generally higher for units that include unique or rare landforms and prominent riparian corridors with flowing water. A score of 3.5 was the highest rating, which was recorded for the Rounded Rocks Unit (#003) and the Tuttle Creek Canyon Unit (#005).

Scarcity was generally lower for flat and low rolling shrublands which are common features within the physiographic province. A score of 1.5 was the lowest rating, which was recorded for the Alabama Hills Unit (#001) and the Movie Flat Unit (#004).

4.6.1.7. CULTURAL MODIFICATIONS

Ratings for cultural modifications were generally neutral throughout the entire inventory area. These ratings reflect the general lack of cultural modifications in the primarily undeveloped inventory area and the presence of modifications that positively and negatively impact the landscapes in units where more development has occurred. The average SQFI rating for the overall inventory area was approximately 0.0.

Only two units had scores other than zero. The Alabama Hills Unit (#001) had a score of 0.5, as a result of the favorable impact of the historic mining. The Movie Flat Unit (#004) had a score of -0.5 due to the network of existing roads.

4.6.2. Scenic Quality Ratings

The scenic quality rating is the result of totaling the scores of the seven key factors on the SQFI form and assigning the rating according to the following scale:

- **Class A** = 19 points or more
- **Class B** = 12 to 18 points
- **Class C** = 11 points or less

The analysis included the evaluation of the key factors for all five SQRUs. In numerous cases, increments of 0.5 were used to determine a more accurate score for a particular factor. As such, ratings falling between A and B (a score of 18.5) or B and C (a score of 11.5) were rounded up to the higher classification.

One SQRU received a Class A rating; this unit accounts for 0.8 percent of the inventoried area. The highest rating given was 23.0 for the Tuttle Creek Canyon Unit (#005). The high scenic quality score in this unit was due primarily to the magnitude of the landforms, the varied vegetation due to the riparian corridor, and the adjacent views of Mount Whitney and the Sierra Nevada mountains.

The rest of the scores for the SQRUs in the inventory area were in the range of 12 to 16, which placed the unit ratings in Class B for overall scenic quality. These units encompass not only the Alabama Hills and the rounded, rolling boulders but also the flat to rolling shrublands and uplands that surround these landforms. These remaining four units have a Class B rating and these units account for approximately 99.2 percent of the areas inventoried. The highest B rating was 16.0, which was recorded for the Alabama Hills Upland Unit (#002) and the Rounded Rocks Unit (#003).

The SQRU "explanations" listed in Tables 1 and 2 are brief explanations derived directly from the geodatabase. The explanations are limited by character count within the geodatabase and therefore do not include detailed information regarding cultural modifications and special designations within the units. Detailed information for each SQRU is provided in Appendix A.

Table 1. Scenic Quality Rating - Listed in Order of Rating

SCENIC QUALITY RATING UNIT SUMMARY Unit Number & Name	Landform	Vegetation	Water	Color	Adjacent Scenery	Scarcity	Cultural Modification	Score	Rating	Explanation
005 Tuttle Creek Canyon	4	4.5	3	3	5	3.5	0	23	A	SQRU 005 consists of the rock and boulder canyon surrounding Tuttle Creek and includes predominantly Cottonwood riparian vegetation associated with the perennial stream.
002 Alabama Hills Upland	2	3.5	1	2.5	5	2	0	16	B	SQRU 002 consists of the fanned upland area leading to the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains on the west side of the NSA where the vegetation transitions to pinyon-juniper and larger sage brush.
003 Rounded Rocks	4.5	1	0	2	5	3.5	0	16	B	SQRU 003 consists of dominating rounded boulder and rugged rock outcrop features, which make up most of the landforms in the interior of the NSA.
001 Alabama Hills	3	1	0	1.5	5	1.5	0.5	12.5	B	SQRU 001 consists entirely of the of the topographically complex and large landforms of the Alabama Hills, which make up the eastern edge of the NSA.
004 Movie Flat Unit	1	1.5	2	1.5	5	1.5	-0.5	12	B	SQRU 004 consists of the flatlands that occur across the NSA and lacks notable features. The unit includes the majority of the network of roads and dispersed and established campsites found in the NSA.

Table 2. Scenic Quality Rating - Listed in Order of Unit

SCENIC QUALITY RATING UNIT SUMMARY Unit Number & Name	Landform	Vegetation	Water	Color	Adjacent Scenery	Scarcity	Cultural Modification	Score	Rating	Explanation
001 Alabama Hills	3	1	0	1.5	5	1.5	0.5	12.5	B	SQRU 001 consists entirely of the of the topographically complex and large landforms of the Alabama Hills, which make up the eastern edge of the NSA.
002 Alabama Hills Upland	2	3.5	1	2.5	5	2	0	16	B	SQRU 002 consists of the fanned upland area leading to the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains on the west side of the NSA where the vegetation transitions to pinyon-juniper and larger sage brush.
003 Rounded Rocks	4.5	1	0	2	5	3.5	0	16	B	SQRU 003 consists of dominating rounded boulder and rugged rock outcrop features, which make up most of the landforms in the interior of the NSA.
004 Movie Flat Unit	1	1.5	2	1.5	5	1.5	-0.5	12	B	SQRU 004 consists of the flatlands that occur across the NSA and lacks notable features. The unit includes the majority of the network of roads and dispersed and established campsites found in the NSA.
005 Tuttle Creek Canyon	4	4.5	3	3	5	3.5	0	23	A	SQRU 005 consists of the rock and boulder canyon surrounding Tuttle Creek and includes predominantly Cottonwood riparian vegetation associated with the perennial stream.

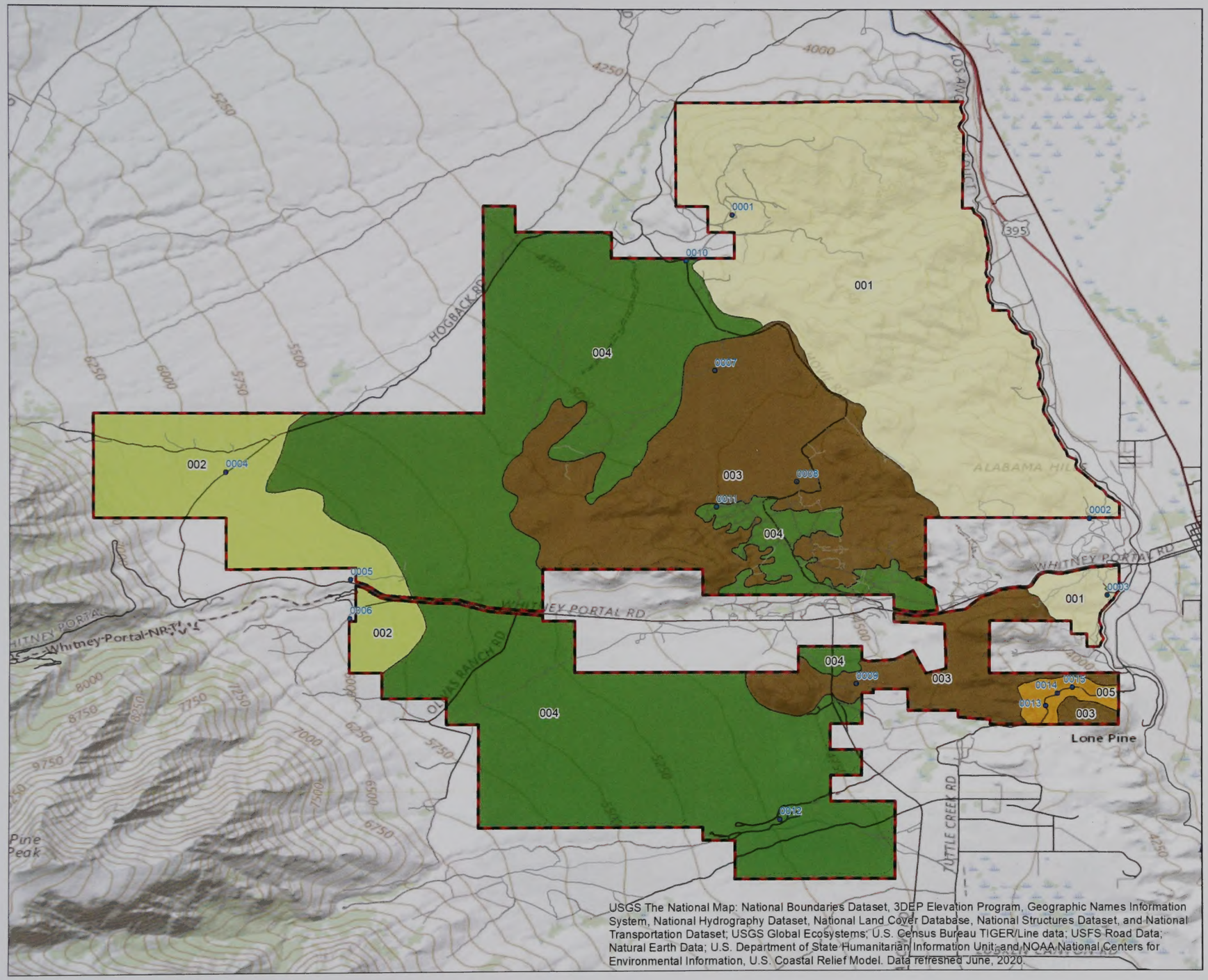


Figure 8: Landforms

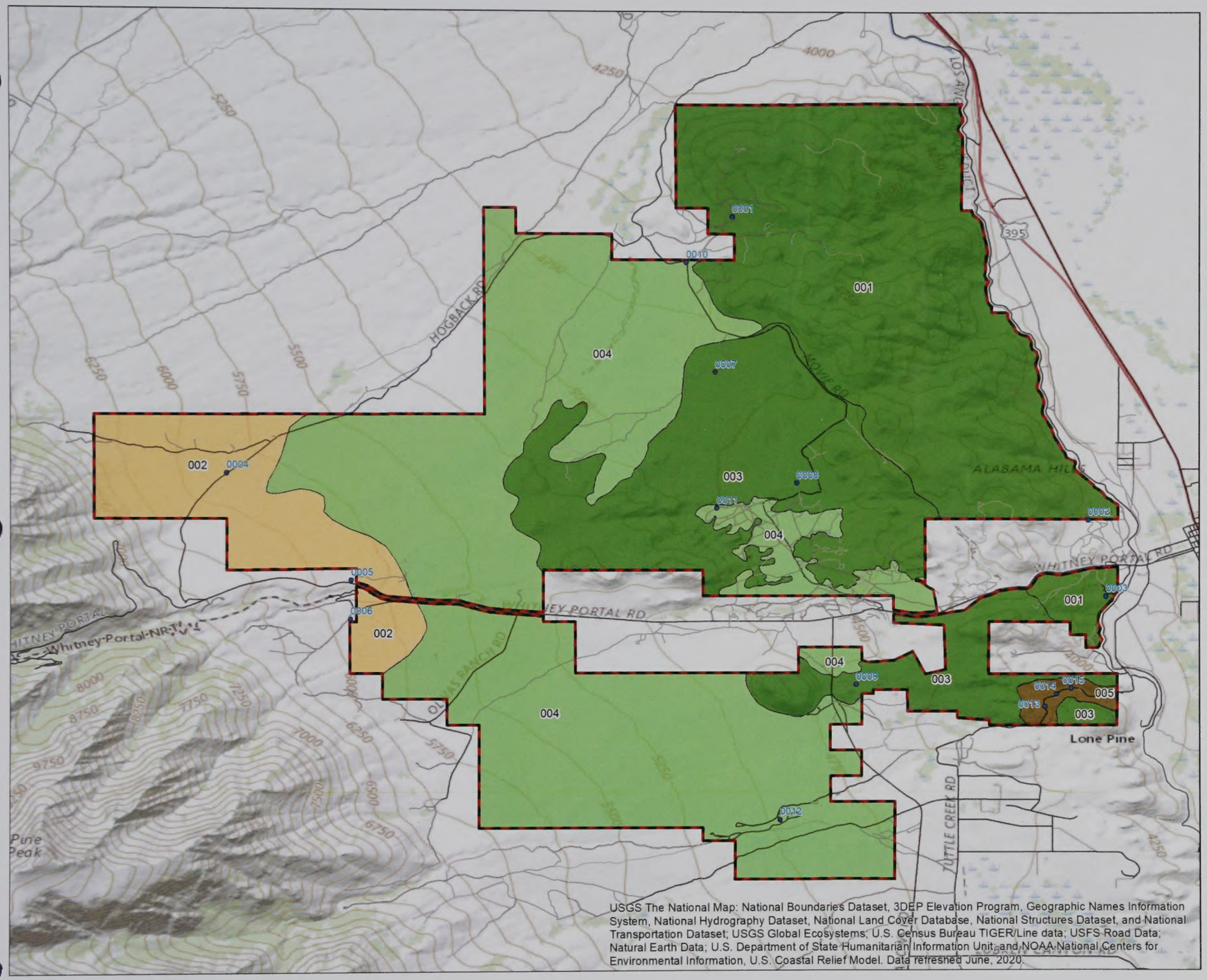


Figure 9: Vegetation

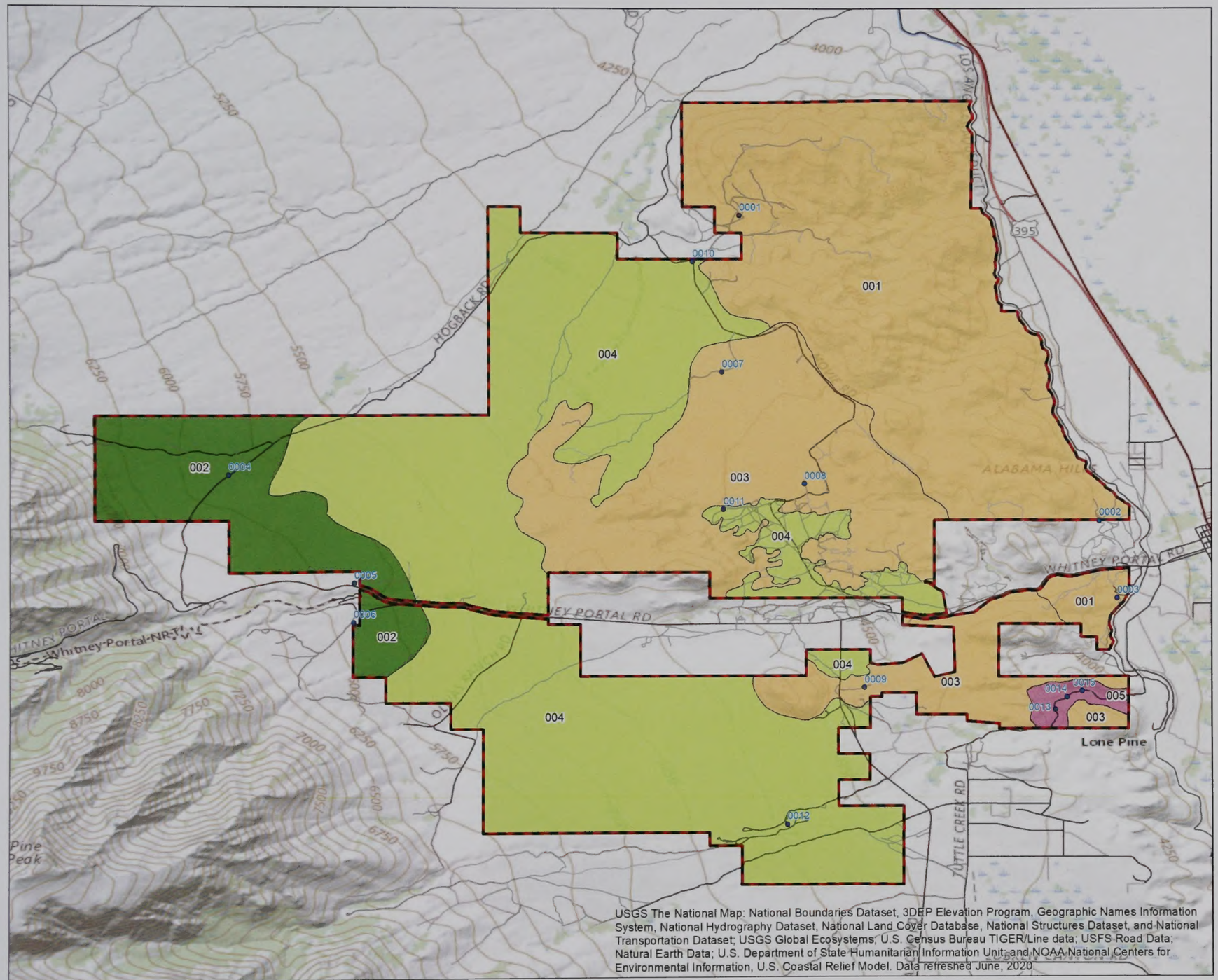


Figure 10: Water

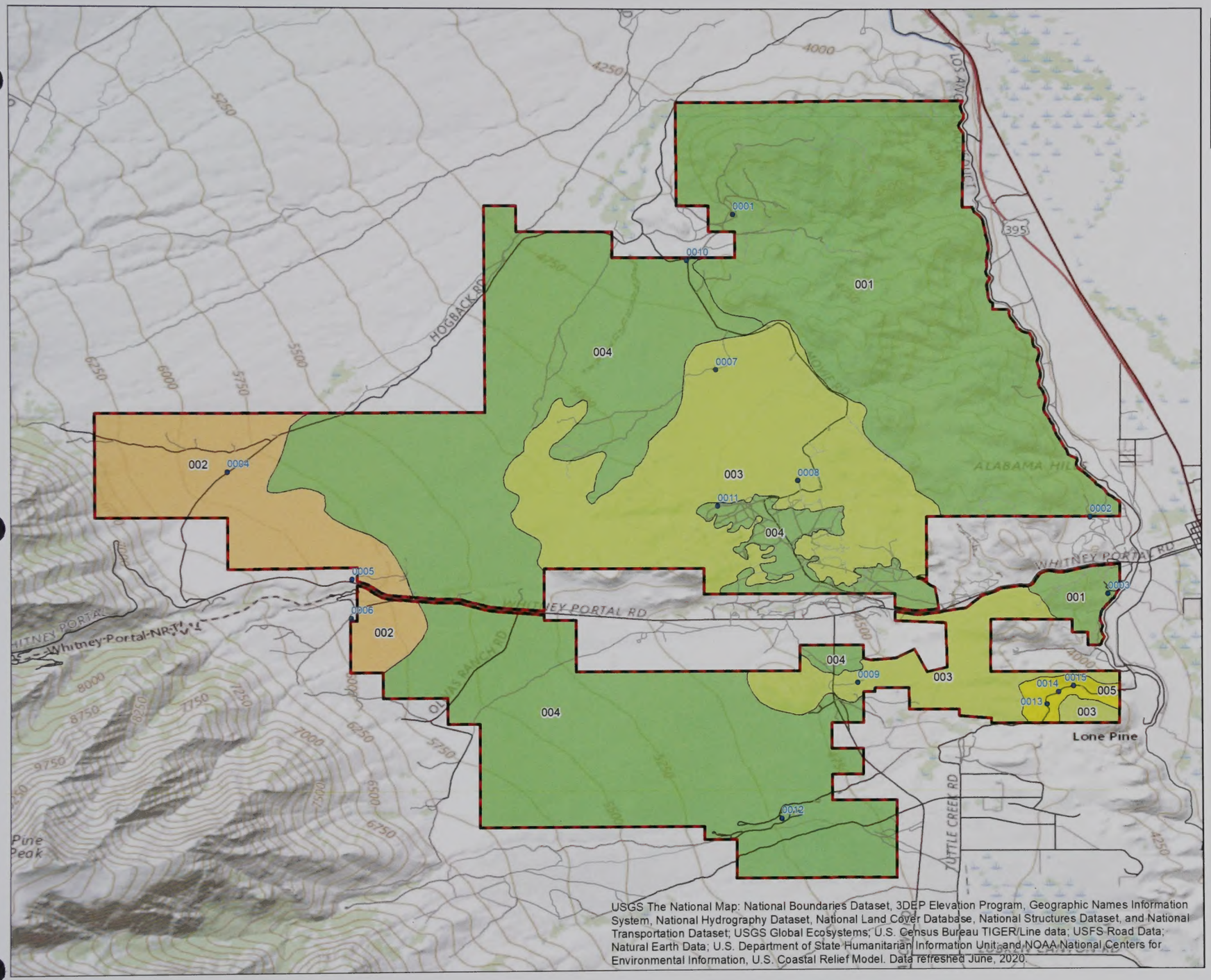


Figure 11: Color

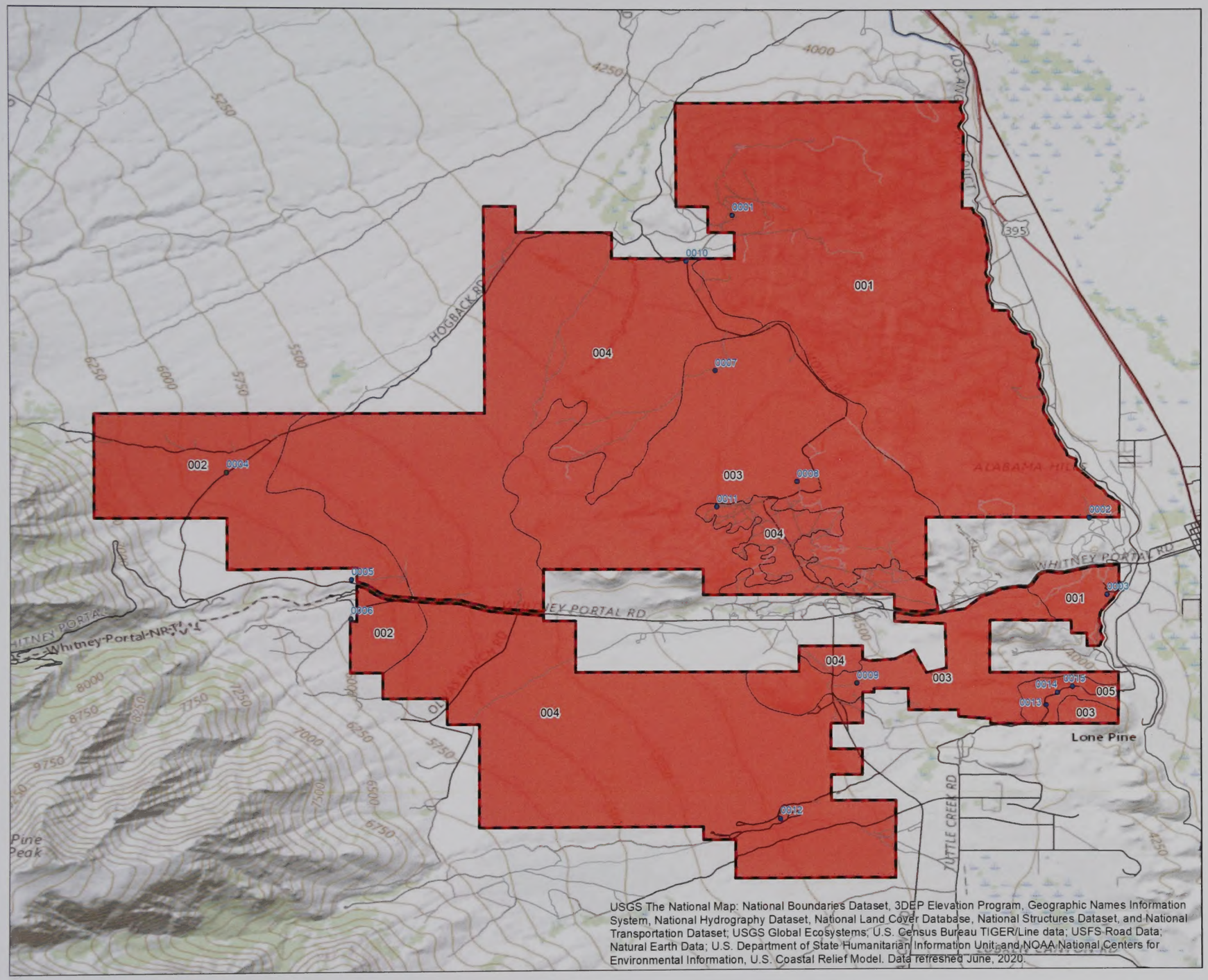


Figure 12: Influence of Adjacent Scenery

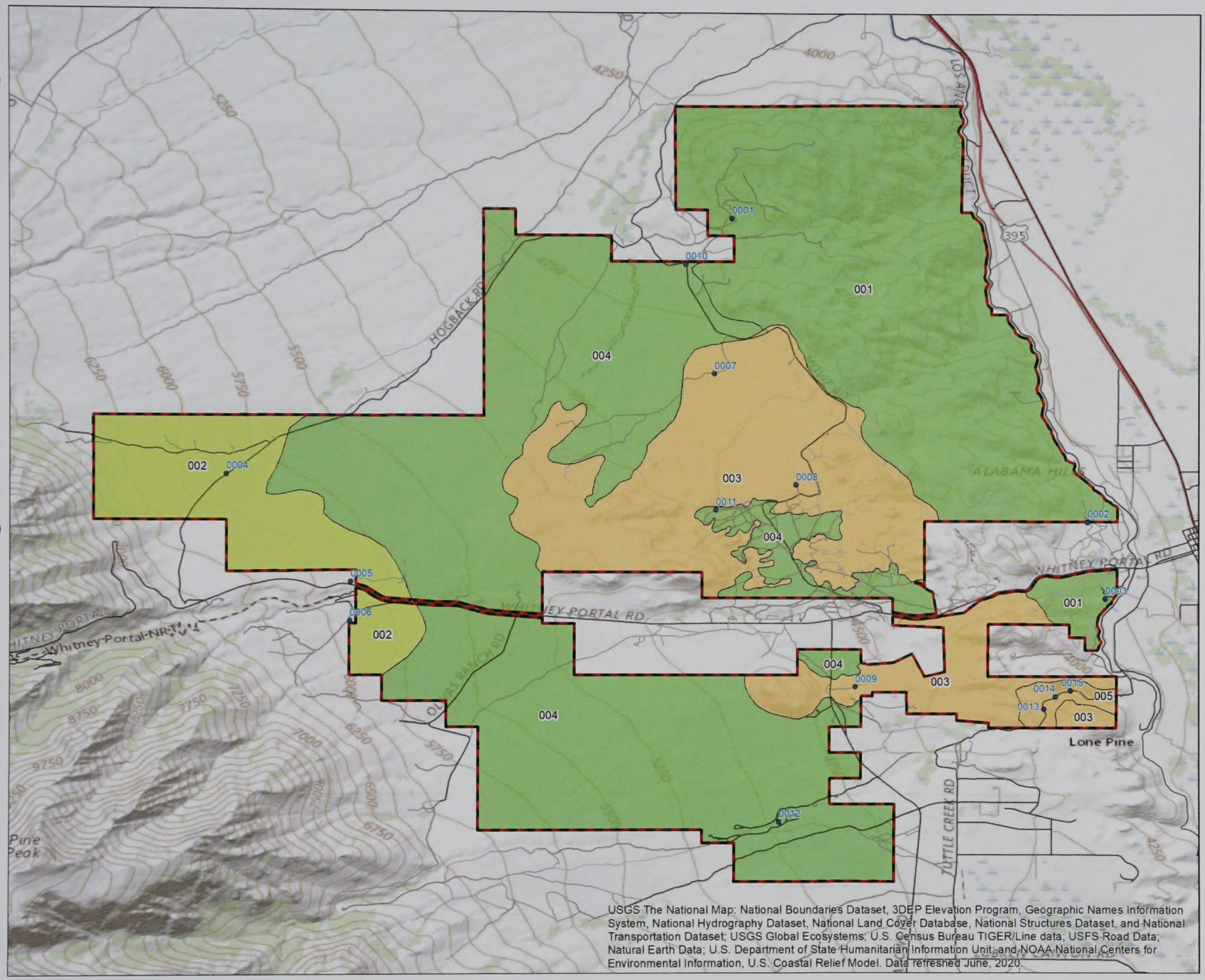


Figure 13: Scarcity

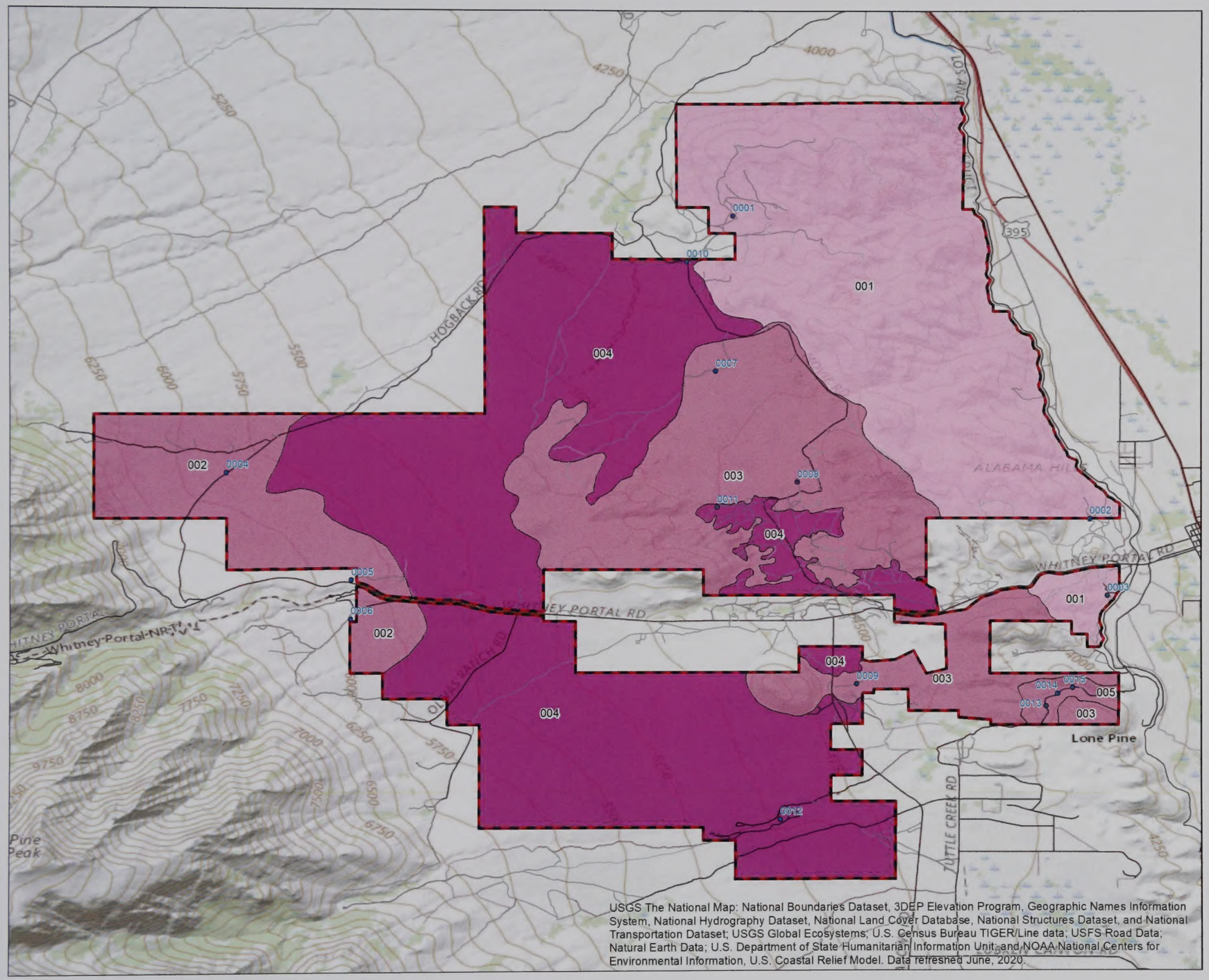
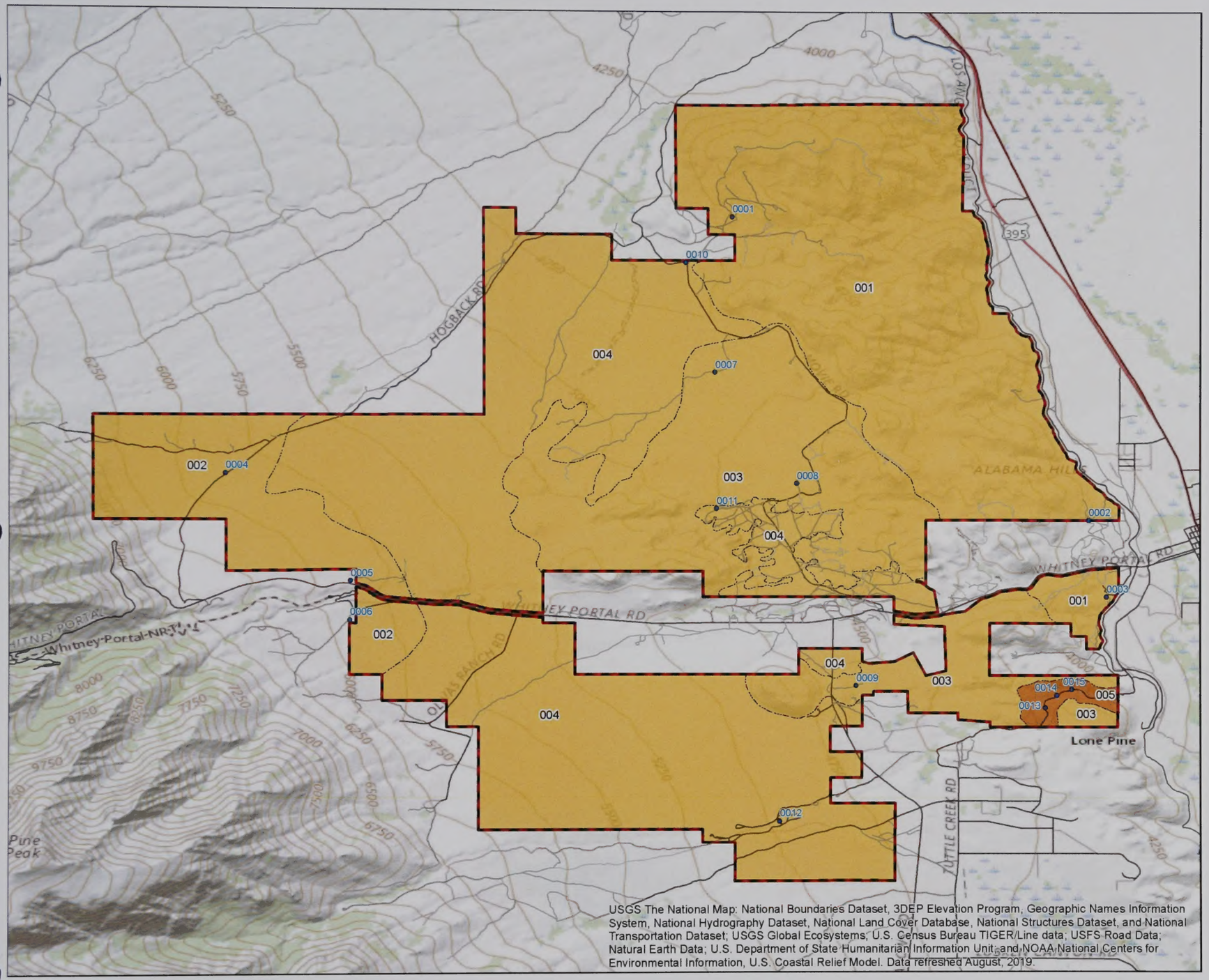


Figure 14: Cultural Modifications



Scenic Quality Classification
Alabama Hills National Scenic Area

	Scenic Quality Rating Unit Boundary			
007	SQRU Number			
0001	IOP Number			
	Alabama Hills National Scenic Area Boundary			
Administrative Boundaries		**Acres**	**% of Total Acres w/in VRI Boundary**	**% of BLM Acres w/in VRI Boundary**
	Visual Resource Inventory Boundary	18,829	100%	
	VRI Boundary Non-BLM Acres	93	<1%	
	VRI Boundary BLM Acres	18,736	99%	100%
Visual Resource Inventory				
	Total Area Inventoried	18,829	100%	100%
	Scenic Quality A	144	1%	1%
	Scenic Quality B	18,685	99%	99%
	Scenic Quality C	0	0%	0%

SQRU Number - SQRU Name

001 - Alabama Hills
002 - Alabama Hills Upland
003 - Rounded Rocks
004 - Movie Flat
005 - Tuttle Creek Canyon

NORTH

0 1 2
Miles

Figure 15. Scenic Quality Classifications

5.0 — Inventory Factor 2: Sensitivity Levels

CHAPTER 5:
Inventory Factor 2: Sensitivity Levels

5.1 Overview

The evaluation of sensitivity levels during the VRI process documents the public's concern for the visual environment on public lands by assigning high, moderate, or low sensitivity level ratings to delineated units within the inventory area. The following factors, as defined in Section III.A of BLM H-8410-1, are analyzed during this evaluation:

- **Types of Users**—Visual sensitivity will vary with the type of users. Recreational sightseers may be highly sensitive to any changes in visual quality, whereas workers who pass through the area on a regular basis may not be as sensitive to change.
- **Amount of Use**—Areas seen and used by large numbers of people are potentially more sensitive. Protection of visual values usually becomes more important as the number of viewers increase.
- **Public Interest**—The visual quality of an area may be of concern to local, State, or national groups. Indicators of this concern are usually expressed in public meetings, letters, newspapers or magazine articles, newsletters, land use plans, etc. Public controversy created in response to proposed activities that would change the landscape character should be considered.
- **Adjacent Land Uses**—The interrelationship with land uses on adjacent lands can affect the visual sensitivity of an area. For example, an area within the viewshed of a residential area may be very sensitive, whereas an area surrounded by commercially developed lands may not be visually sensitive.
- **Special Areas**—Management objectives for special areas such as Natural Areas, Wilderness Areas or WSAs, WSRs, Scenic Areas, Scenic Roads or Trails, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) frequently require special consideration for the protection of the visual values. This does not necessarily mean that these areas are scenic but rather that one of the management objectives may be to preserve the natural landscape setting. The management objectives for these areas may be used as a basis for assigning sensitivity levels.
- **Other Factors**—Consider any other information such as research or studies that includes indicators of visual sensitivity.

According to BLM Manual 8400, there are no standard procedures for delineating sensitivity level rating units (SLRUs). The SLRU boundaries depend on the factors driving the sensitivity consideration at the time of the inventory and reflect public sentiment, which requires a qualitative analytical approach to understand and describe geospatially.

The most important aspect of preparing the SLRUs is a thorough review and understanding of the sensitivity factors described above. Units can be based on physical attributes of the land, delineation of viewsheds from primary travel routes and popular viewpoints, or any other means that prove useful in capturing changes in sensitivity based on the sensitivity factors. Distance zones from population centers or popular recreation destinations can also play an important role in identifying the SLRU boundaries because sensitivity to change in the visual landscape can be moderated by the visibility of potential change from locations where people typically view the landscape.

Determining the overall sensitivity level rating of a SLRU is a qualitative analysis that is improved by considering input from local land use policies and ordinances, other agency directives, and public sentiment gleaned from news articles, social media posts, and past public outreach responses. Additionally, careful consideration of the sensitivity factors by BLM staff members who have the detailed knowledge of the use of public lands within their office is important.

The intent of the sensitivity rating process is to provide three general ranges of visual sensitivity for planning purposes. Areas of high, moderate, and low sensitivity are assigned at the macro level, but there are undoubtedly smaller, site-specific areas of higher and lower sensitivities within each SLRU. Of note, low sensitivity does not indicate a lack of sensitivity; some populations within low sensitivity rated areas could hold a considerable level of concern.

5.2. Inventory and Evaluation Methodology

In conjunction with the initial kickoff meeting in September 2020, the inventory team reviewed the inventory area in Google Earth projected onto a large screen; the team then identified locations of increased public sensitivity to visual change and identified a few locations with lessened sensitivity due to less visitation and viewing as part of the Alabama Hills NSA. A list of recommended research resources and external contacts for outreach was developed during this workshop, including the Alabama Hills Management Plan scoping efforts that took place for the environmental assessment that was being conducted.

After the meeting, Logan Simpson staff used the information gathered and provided by BLM BFO staff to conduct research and gain a detailed understanding of the public sensitivities within the inventory area. The literature search identified specific policies, guidelines, goals, and/or strategies that local, regional, and State agencies and communities have for protecting scenic views and places. This search included a review of agency and community websites and plans—identifying visions, goals, destination locations, tourism information, etc.—that would assist in determining visually important areas within the inventory area.

Tourism websites and hard copy pamphlets were likewise studied to determine which areas are being marketed for their scenic attributes. Detailed notes—along with polygons, points, and lines that geospatially located the sensitive viewing locations—were recorded during the literature research efforts. If the viewshed from these sensitive locations was identified as an important component to the viewer, a visibility analysis was then conducted in GIS for the location.

To develop preliminary SLRU polygons, Logan Simpson staff overlaid all georeferenced sensitivity records and viewsheds in Google Earth and ESRI ArcGIS software. By evaluating trends between these data layers and general, non-geolocated sensitivity data records, staff were able to delineate preliminary SLRU boundaries based on types of use, public interest, and special area data gathered through research efforts.

Preliminary Sensitivity Level Rating Sheets (Form 8400-6, BLM H-8410-1) were filled out to include all relevant information gathered through research, noting data gaps where present.

As part of the VRI workshop Logan Simpson organized and presented for the BLM BFO in January 2020, the preliminary SLRU polygons and forms were reviewed by the inventory team. During this review, Logan Simpson oriented BLM staff to SLRU research results and explained the preliminary SLRU development process. The BLM BFO staff's local knowledge of the inventory area was incorporated to fill in data gaps for each unit.

After the VRI workshop, Logan Simpson revised the SLRU boundaries and information, as necessary, and shared the draft SLRU boundaries and form files with the BLM BFO staff via email on May 3, 2020. As an internal team, BLM repeated the SLRU review and completion process to confirm or edit each unit's boundary and augment existing information recorded in the preliminary 8400-6 forms. To capture the full range of people that may have potential concerns, the process considered potential local, regional, national, and international concerns. Consideration was also given to public entities that use portions of the inventory area for recreation/tourism, business, or residential purposes, as well as those that do not necessarily use areas but are nonetheless concerned about the existence of the visual aspects of the landscape. The analysis also accounted for various types of concerns, including the amount of exposure, adjacency of uses/ landscapes, special identification of areas, and general significance to the public entities. Discussions during the SLRU review and rating process also included BLM staff's initial impressions regarding the varying amounts of public resilience to change throughout the inventory area.

The areas with moderate to high sensitivity are associated with major recreation and high-traffic areas, as well as the unique landforms that make up the Alabama Hills NSA. One SLRU within the inventory area was concluded to have a high sensitivity rating – the Recreation Unit (#001). This unit contains the vast majority of the areas frequented by visitors to the Scenic Area and, as such, is the most sensitive to visual change. One SLRU within the inventory area was concluded to have a moderate sensitivity rating – the Geology Unit (#002). This unit includes the Alabama Hills and the rounded, rolling boulder fields that are unique to the Scenic Area. One SLRU within the inventory area was concluded to have low a low sensitivity rating – the Open Space Unit (#003). This unit is predominantly made up of the areas which are infrequently visited by recreationists and are flat, open areas where little development in terms of roads and trails has occurred.

Low sensitivity does not indicate a lack of concern in these areas; some publics within these areas could hold a considerable level of concern. The intent of the sensitivity rating process is to provide three general ranges of visual sensitivity for planning purposes. Areas of high and moderate sensitivity have been assigned at the macro level for this process, but there are undoubtedly smaller site-specific areas of higher and lower sensitivities within each of the high and moderate macro-level ratings.

5.3. Rating Criteria and Scoring Method

Sensitivity data gathered for the inventory process was synthesized on Sensitivity Level Rating Sheets to allow for direct entry of data into the VRI database. This data was based on the integration of literature review, outreach, and inventory team input. Following entry into the VRI database, this information was processed to create a preliminary sensitivity level rating map. The map displayed each of the SLRUs identified through the delineation process. Sensitivity ratings were assigned to each SLRU based on the data gathered, as well as in accordance with the rating criteria identified in BLM Manual 8400. The SLRUs were then finalized by the inventory team, and the information was incorporated into the inventory database and GIS mapping to produce the final SLRU map. Final SLRU rating forms are provided in Appendix B.

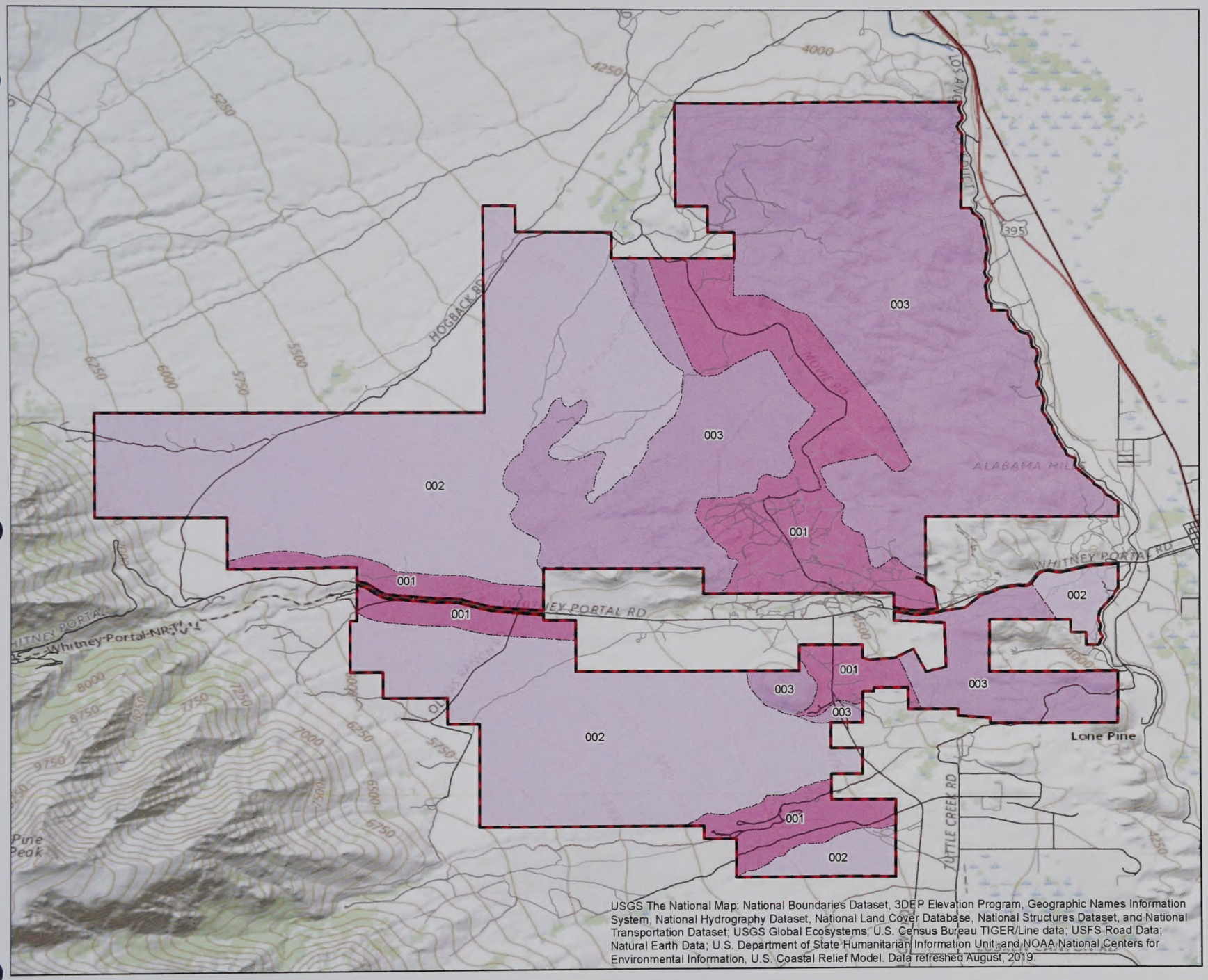
5.4. Sensitivity Level Rating Summary

Sensitivity levels are generally higher in portions of the inventory area with the greatest visitor use and visibility. Areas rated as having high sensitivity accounted for the smallest percentage within the inventory area (approximately 16.5 percent). These areas of high sensitivity are primarily in the central and southern portions of the inventory area and encompass a variety of commonly used recreation areas and high-traffic transportation corridors. Approximately 41.4 percent of the inventory area was rated as having moderate sensitivity. Areas with low sensitivity accounted for the largest percentage of the inventory area, albeit just slightly, at 42.1 percent of the inventory area. Table 3 and Figures 16 presents the sensitivity level ratings for the inventory area.

The SLRU "explanations" listed in Table 3 are brief explanations derived directly from the geodatabase. The explanations are limited by character count within the geodatabase and therefore do not consistently include detailed information regarding cultural modifications and special designations within the SLRUs. Detailed explanations/syntheses for each SLRU are provided in Appendix B.

Table 3. Sensitivity Level Ratings by Sensitivity Level Rating Unit

SENSITIVITY LEVEL RATING UNIT SUMMARY								
Unit Number & Name	Type of Use	Amount of Use	Public Interest	Adjacent Land Uses	Special Areas	Other Factors	Overall Rating	**Explanation**
001 Recreational Areas	H	H	H	M	M	H	H	The volume of use in this SLRU is the highest in the NSA, coupled with the panoramic backdrop of the Sierra Nevada and Inyo mountain ranges, results in a high level of sensitivity.
002 Open Space	L	L	L	M	NA	NA	L	Visitors to the NSA predominantly view this unit as they travel in and across other units. Due to the remote nature of the unit and low public use, sensitivity to visual change is low.
003 Geological Features	M	M	H	M	H	NA	M	Local, regional, national, and international users utilize this unit for recreational activities and experiences. Due to limited access and topography, this unit is moderately used but the importance of the views of this unit increase the sensitivity.



USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset, 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line data; USFS Road Data; Natural Earth Data; U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit; and NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, U.S. Coastal Relief Model. Data refreshed August, 2019.

Sensitivity Level Classification
Alabama Hills National Scenic Area

	Sensitivity Level Rating Unit Boundary			
007	SLRU Number			
	Alabama Hills National Scenic Area Boundary			
Administrative Boundaries		**Acres**	**% of Total Acres w/in VRI Boundary**	**% of BLM Acres w/in VRI Boundary**
	Visual Resource Inventory Boundary	18,829	100%	
	VRI Boundary Non-BLM Acres	93	<1%	
	VRI Boundary BLM Acres	18,736	99%	100%
Visual Resource Inventory				
	Total Area Inventoried	18,829	100%	100%
	Sensitivity Level - High	3,113	17%	17%
	Sensitivity Level - Moderate	7,791	41%	41%
	Sensitivity Level - Low	7,925	42%	42%

SLRU Number - SLRU Name

001 - Recreational Areas

002 - Open Space

003 - Geologic Features

NORTH

0 1 2

Miles

Figure 16: Sensitivity Level Ratings

6.0 — Inventory Factor 3: Visual Distance Zones

CHAPTER 6:
Inventory Factor 3: Visual Distance Zones

6.1. Overview

The analysis of distance zones in the VRM process considers the distance from which the area is generally viewed, but does not take into account every possible viewing location. According to BLM H-8410-1, landscape areas are generally subdivided into three distance zones based on their relative visibility from travel routes or other observation points:

- **Foreground-middleground (FM) zone**—Areas that are seen from major highways and other primary travelways, rivers, trails, or other viewing locations that are less than 3 to 5 miles away.
- **Background (BG) zone**—Areas that are seen beyond the FM zone to a distance of about 15 miles away.
- **Seldom-seen (SS) zone**—Areas that are not visible within the FM and BG zones and areas beyond the BG zones.

Distance zone delineations can provide valuable information during the visual sensitivity level analysis because changes are more noticeable and more likely to trigger public concern in landscape areas that are more visible (e.g., FM zone). Distance zone boundaries may also help define an area's SLRU boundaries. Distance zone delineations can be valuable during the RMP process when adjustments to VRM classes are made to resolve resource allocation conflicts.

6.2. Mapping Methodology

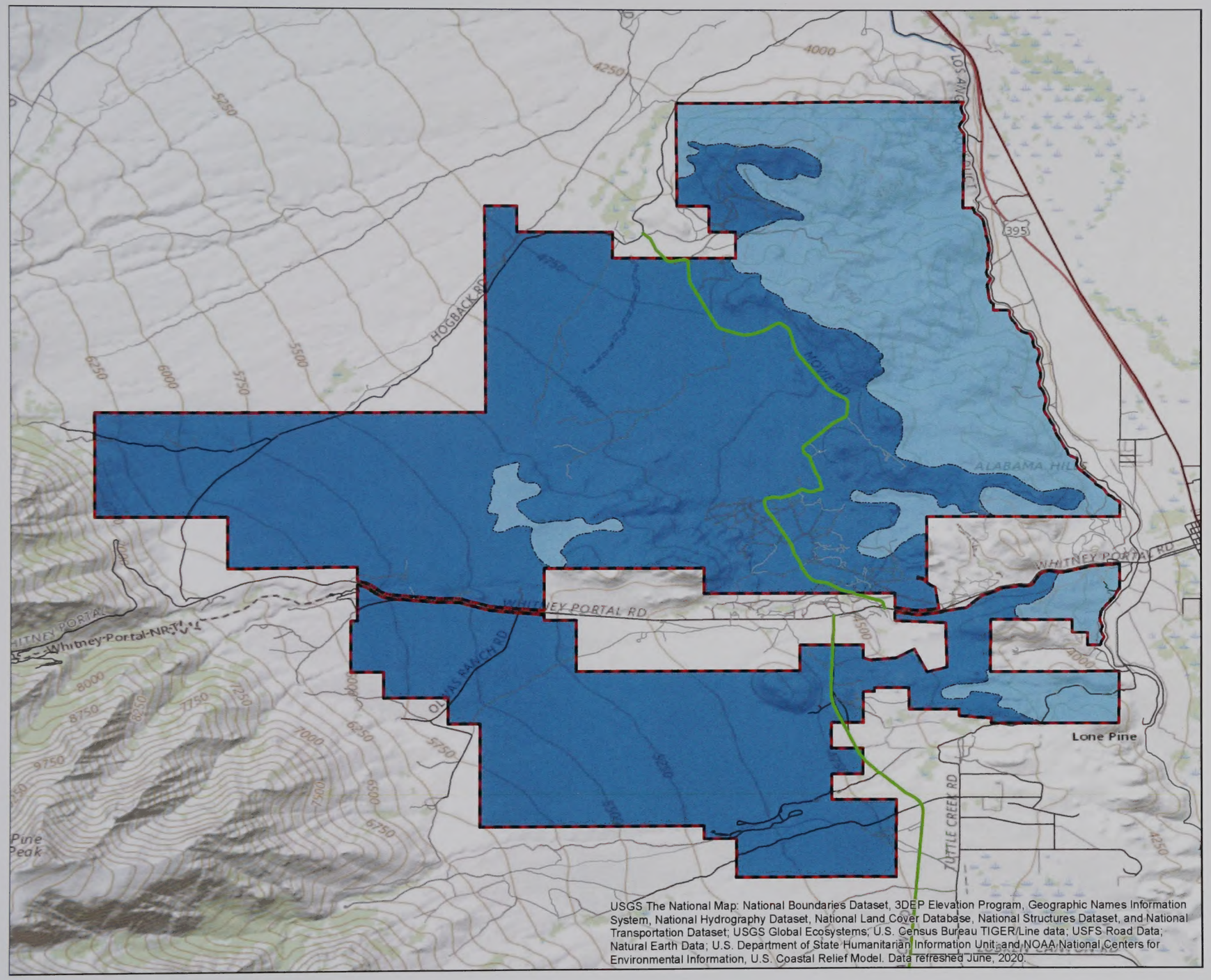
BLM staff provided previously identified roads, trails, viewpoints, communities, and other locations for use as viewing platforms in the distance zone delineation process as described in BLM H-8410-1. A number of primary travel routes, trailheads, recreation sites, and viewpoints, both inside and outside the inventory area, were identified as the locations from which the general public would most often view landscapes within the inventory area. However, due to the size of the inventory area, significant filtering of the platforms had to occur so as to not oversaturate the inventory area with FM zones and to identify the platforms of highest use and, subsequently, greatest numbers of views. The distance zone platforms are represented on the maps in Appendix C.

Logan Simpson GIS specialists performed distance zone offsets, in accordance with BLM H-8410-1, using ESRI ArcGIS software. The distance zones were offset from the viewing platforms with a distance of 5 miles for the FM zone and 15 miles for the BG zone. Areas beyond 15 miles were assigned to the SS zone. To supplement the distance zone offset process, a viewshed (or visibility) analysis was performed from each of the identified viewing platforms to identify areas within each zone that would not be visible. These viewshed analyses were performed using the best available digital elevation data for the inventory area, which consisted of 10-meter digital elevation models in GIS. To run these viewshed analyses, observation points were generated approximately 500 feet apart for all linear platforms. These models do not reflect vegetation or structures within the inventory area. This type of analysis, based on a "bare-earth" landscape, provides a worst-case scenario of visible areas. This type of viewshed analysis is also fairly representative of the inventory area because the vast majority of the area is covered by large expanses of low vegetation (or vegetation that does not typically obstruct visibility). Based on the results of these analyses, polygons were created to represent areas that were not visible from the platforms; these areas were added to the SS zone.

6.3. Distance Zone Summary

Platforms chosen were based either on their use as primary access routes to major recreation areas within the inventory area. Approximately 75.0 percent of lands within the inventory area fall within the FM zone due to the relatively open views created by the flat shrublands around the transportation corridors chosen for the distance zone analysis (Figure 17 and Appendix C). These platforms include road Movie Flat Road and Horseshoe Meadows Road, which were selected due to the significant amount of use that these roads see, when compared with the other roads within the Alabama Hills NSA.

The remaining approximately 25.0 percent of the inventory area falls within the SS zone–no areas were identified as being in the BG zone due to the size of the inventory area. Designating areas as "seldom seen" is a function of the key platforms selected for analysis rather than an indication that the areas are truly seldom seen. Other areas in the SS zone are generally less developed, have far fewer travel routes from which they could be viewed, or are totally inaccessible by vehicles.



Visual Distance Zone Classification
Alabama Hills National Scenic Area

- Visual Distance Zone Boundary
- Visual Distance Zone Platform Road
- Alabama Hills National Scenic Area Boundary

Administrative Boundaries		Acres	% of Total Acres w/in VRI Boundary	% of BLM Acres w/in VRI Boundary
	Visual Resource Inventory Boundary	18,829	100%	
	VRI Boundary Non-BLM Acres	93	<1%	
	VRI Boundary BLM Acres	18,736	99%	100%
Visual Resource Inventory				
	Total Area Inventoried	18,829	100%	100%
	Foreground/Middleground	14,145	75%	75%
	Background	0	0%	0%
	Seldom Seen	4,591	25%	25%

NORTH
0 1 2
Miles

Figure 17: Visual Distance Zone Ratings

7.0 — Visual Resource Inventory Classes

CHAPTER 7:
Visual Resource Inventory Classes

7.1 Overview

The VRM system includes four VRI classes. Class I is assigned to areas where the current management requires maintaining a natural environment that is essentially unaltered by humans. Classes II, III, and IV are assigned according to combinations of scenic quality, sensitivity levels, and distance zones as outlined in the BLM's Visual Resource Inventory Matrix (Figure 18).

There are no VRI Class I areas in the inventory area; VRI Classes II, III, and IV were determined by overlaying final scenic quality ratings, sensitivity level ratings, and distance zones in ArcGIS. Figure 19 depicts the visual resource classes for the inventory area.

7.2 Visual Resource Inventory Classes

The majority of the inventory area, approximately 65.9 percent (12,405 acres), was designated as VRI Class IV because these areas consist primarily of landscapes with B ratings for scenic quality and either moderate sensitivity levels with seldom seen distance zones or low sensitivity levels with foreground-middleground distance zones (Figure 19).

VRI Class III areas are relatively centralized in the inventory areas and consist of a variety of landscapes. These areas account for approximately 16.9 percent (3,184 acres) and are all scenic quality B-rated, moderate sensitivity levels, and in the foreground-middleground distance zone.

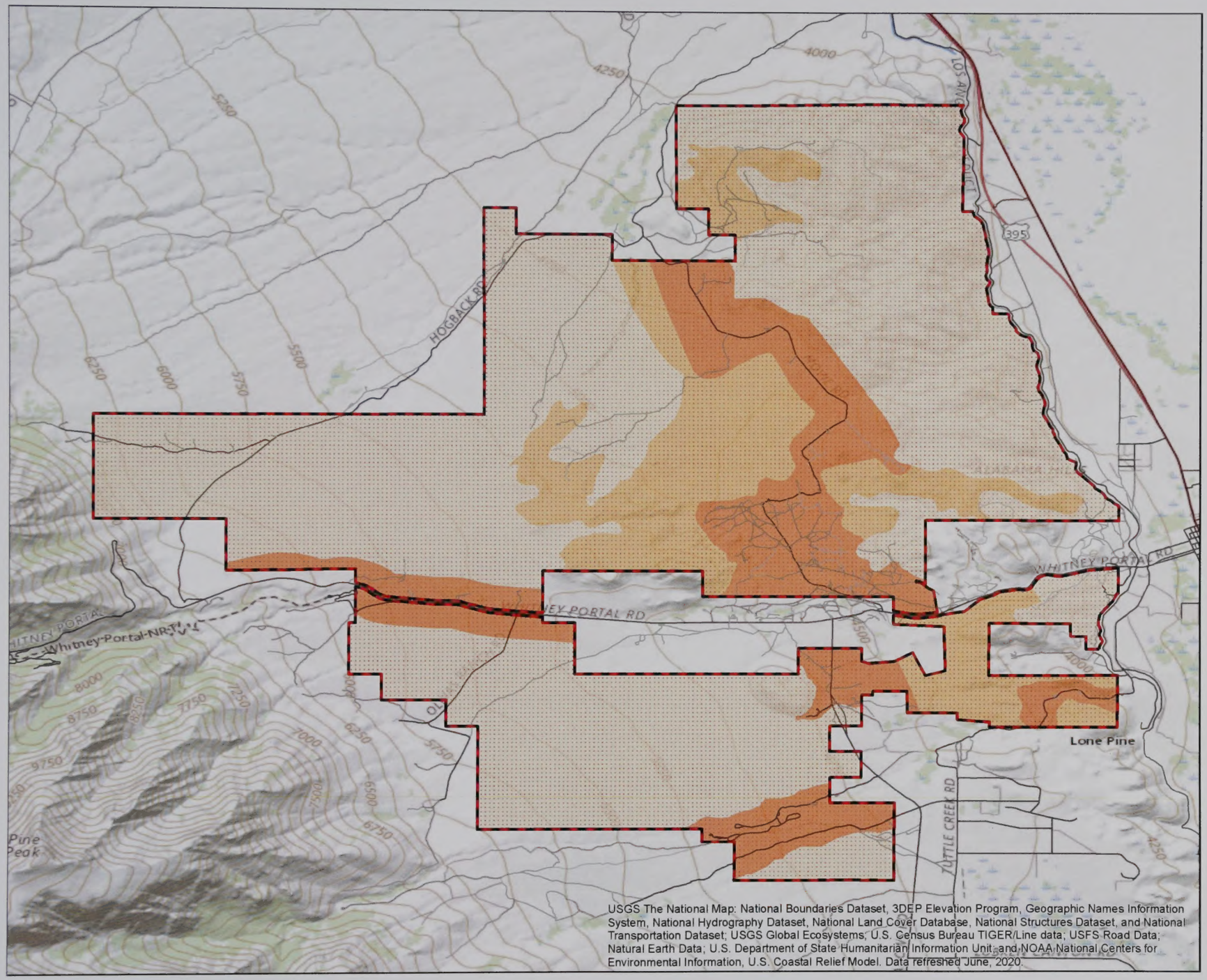
Approximately 17.2 percent (3,240 acres) of the inventory area was designated as Class II. These locations are predominantly scenic quality B-rated, high sensitivity levels, and in the foreground-middleground distance zone, but also include the small portion of A-rated scenic quality in the inventory area.

No portion of the inventory area was designated as Class I. This is because there are no specially designated areas in the inventory area being managed for preservation purposes, such as WSAs.

Figure 18. Visual Resource Inventory Class Matrix

		Visual Sensitivity Levels						
		High			Moderate			Low
Special Areas		Class I	Class I	Class I	Class I	Class I	Class I	Class I
Scenic Quality	A	Class II	Class II	Class II	Class II	Class II	Class II	Class II
	B	Class II	Class III	Class III*	Class III	Class IV	Class IV	Class IV
				Class IV				
	C	Class IV	Class IV	Class IV	Class IV	Class IV	Class IV	Class IV
		FM	BG	SS	FG	BG	SS	SS
		Distance Zones						

Figure Source: Adapted from BLM Manual H-8410-1, Illustration 11 (BLM 1986a).
Figure Note: FM = foreground/middleground, BG = background, SS = seldom seen.
** If adjacent area is Class III or lower, assign Class III; if higher, assign Class IV.*



USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset, 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line data; USFS Road Data; Natural Earth Data; U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit; and NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, U.S. Coastal Relief Model. Data refreshed June, 2020.

Visual Resource Inventory Classification
Alabama Hills National Scenic Area

Alabama Hills National Scenic Area Boundary

Administrative Boundaries		Acres	% of Total Acres w/in VRI Boundary	% of BLM Acres w/in VRI Boundary
	Visual Resource Inventory Boundary	18,829	100%	
	VRI Boundary Non-BLM Acres	93	<1%	
	VRI Boundary BLM Acres	18,736	99%	100%
Visual Resource Inventory				
	Total Area Inventoried	18,829	100%	100%
	VRI Class I	0	0%	0%
	VRI Class II	3,240	17%	17%
	VRI Class III	3,184	17%	17%
	VRI Class IV	12,405	66%	66%

NORTH

0 1 2
Miles

Figure 19: Final VRI Class Ratings

8.0 — References

CHAPTER 8:
References

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Appendix A — Scenic Quality Rating Unit Evaluations

APPENDIX A:
Scenic Quality Rating Unit Evaluations

SQRU Process Overview

As part of the VRI workshop Logan Simpson organized and presented for the BLM BFO in January 2020, BLM staff VRI training and VRI components workshop. The training included a review of BLM's scenic quality evaluation process as described in BLM Manual H-8410-1 (BLM 1986a). The workshop was conducted by Diane Simpson-Colebank, Dylan George-Sills, and Roy Baker from Logan Simpson. More than a dozen interdisciplinary staff members from the BFO participated in the training/workshop. During the workshop, BLM and Logan Simpson refined the draft SQRU delineations, discussed potential IOPs, and identified primary travel routes from which to access IOPs. Preliminary IOPs were determined based on a variety of factors, including expected locations of characteristic landscape views, accessibility, and logistical viewpoint locations. The preliminary IOPs and travel routes were marked on the maps and later transferred to field maps.

In preparation for the workshop, Logan Simpson had developed draft maps and Google Earth files using base GIS data provided by the BFO and supplementary data from open sources. These maps included draft SQRUs delineations that had been prepared by Logan Simpson based primarily on landform, water, and development patterns. BLM and Logan Simpson then collaborated to refine the draft SQRUs based on the BLM staff's knowledge of the visual characteristics of the landscape.

The fieldwork component of the SQRU evaluation process occurred in April 2021. Prior to the fieldwork session, Logan Simpson coordinated with the BFO in the winter of 2020 using Google Earth to establish IOP locations as well as travel routes using field office provided road network data to aid in determining appropriate travel routes. Prior to the fieldwork session, Logan Simpson coordinated with BFO staff to discuss logistics for meeting field office staff that would be participating in the SQRU evaluation process and confirm travel routes identified for each day of fieldwork to effectively navigate National Scenic Area in an efficient manner.

Table 4. SQRU Evaluation Field Schedule

Date	BLM Staff	Start Time	Starting Location
Tuesday April 6, 2021	L. Primosch, S. Lisius, S. Coffman, M. Oliver, M. Buhler, E. Lane, D. Kirk, G. Hall	9:00 am	AHNSA
Wednesday April 7, 2021	L. Primosch, D. Kirk	9:00 am	AHNSA

SQRU evaluations were completed in context with the Basin and Range, in which the inventory area lies. During field inventory, the team completed modified versions of BLM SQFI rating forms (Form 8400-1, BLM H-8410-1; Figures 3a–3b of this VRI report) for each SQRU.

After fieldwork was completed, the information from the inventory forms was entered into a central database and merged with the final boundaries of the SQRUs for use in generating the scenic quality inventory maps and forms for this VRI report.

The information collected on the SQFI forms, along with IOP photos for each unit, is displayed on the following final SQRU forms (Appendix A). The SQFI information is presented in an 11" x 17" format that was designed to optimize readability of the forms, as well as to incorporate the representative photographs of each unit.

Scenic Quality Rating Unit # 001 | Alabama Hills

Date: 4/6/2021 | Field Office: Bishop, ID | Evaluators: D. Simpson-Colebank, D. George-Sills, L. Primosch, S. Lisius, S. Coffman, M. Oliver, M. Buhler, E. Lane, D. Kirk,G. Hall

UNITED STATES
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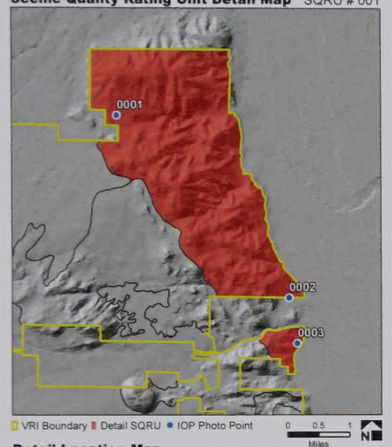
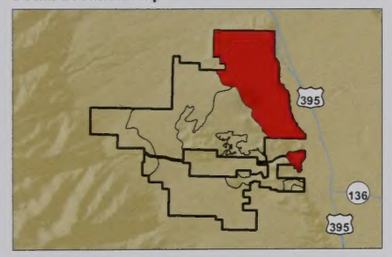
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY

Scenic Quality Rating Unit Detail Map SQRU # 001



Detail Location Map



Landscape Character *(Feature)*

	LANDFORM/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURE
FORM	Prominent, rolling, rounded, domed, and irregular/amorphous hills with scattered rock outcrops and moderate slopes.	Short, rounded shrubs; scattered tall, vertical, riparian trees (Cottonwood, Willow, Tamarisk) along drainages.	Roads are flat, curving, directional, and horizontal; historic mining is geometric, angular, vertical, and isolated.
LINE	Convex and undulating, non-directional, irregular/broken, curving, and vertical.	Weak, irregular, continuous, and simple; directional and clumped along riparian corridor.	Roads are simple, curving, continuous, horizontal, smooth; historic mining is bold, hard, regular, angular, jagged, and perpendicular.
COLOR	Reddish-orange, tan, brown, light greys to black; overall subtle, dull, and harmonious.	Grey-green, taupe, tan, brown and subtle; bright green riparian vegetation.	Roads are tan, khaki, and monotone; historic mining is dark browns, grey to black, dull, and constating with landform and vegetation.
TEXTURE	Smooth to coarse, random, scattered, clumped, and nondirectional.	Smooth overall; riparian vegetations is patchy, scattered, and stippled.	Roads are fine, smooth, continuous, and directional; historic mining is dotted, scattered, and rough.

Narrative

SQRU 001 consists of hills with steep sloping sides and scattered exposed rock outcrops. The magnitude of the landforms is much greater than the other units. The vegetation is primarily made up of short, rounded shrubs with isolated riparian vegetation in linear drainages. Scattered occurrences of historic mining is present within this unit.

Scenic Quality Rating Score

	RATING	EXPLANATION OR RATIONALE
LANDFORM	3	Moderately sloped, rolling, rounded hills with scattered exposed outcrops.
VEGETATION	1	Predominantly short shrubs with isolated riparian vegetation.
WATER	0	No water present or visible.
COLOR	1.5	Subtle variations in color between landform and vegetation with the exception of the isolated riparian vegetation which adds strong contrast where present.
ADJACENT SCENERY	5	The adjacent scenery of the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the west, most notably Mount Whitney (the tallest peak in the lower 48 States), and the Southern Inyo Mountains to the east, greatly enhances the visual quality of the unit.
SCARCITY	1.5	The landscape has some distinctiveness, but is common within the region.
CULTURAL MODIFICATION	0.5	The roads and historic mining add slightly favorably to the visual quality of the unit.
TOTAL	**12.5**	**SCENIC QUALITY RATING = B**

Photos

IOP #001

IOP #002

IOP #003

Scenic Quality Rating Unit # 002 | Alabama Hills Upland

Date: 4/6/2021 | Field Office: Bishop, ID | Evaluators: D. Simpson-Colebank, D. George-Sills, L. Primosch, S. Lisius, S. Coffman, M. Oliver, M. Buhler, E. Lane, D. Kirk,G. Hall

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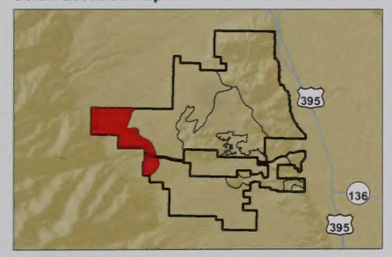
Scenic Quality Rating Unit Detail Map SQRU # 002

Detail Location Map



Landscape Character *(Feature)*

	LANDFORM/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURE
FORM	Undulating to rolling, directional, and west-to-east sloping with scattered large boulders strewn across the unit.	Short- to moderate-height, spherical shrubs; tall, conical pinyon-juniper.	Roads are flat, curving, directional, and horizontal; transmission lines are regular, tall, vertical, repetitive, and simple.
LINE	Sloping to horizontal, directional, simple, converging, and flowing; scattered boulders.	Continuous shrubs, indistinct and inconsistent tree lines; directional and flowing along major drainages.	Roads are simple, curving, continuous, horizontal, smooth; transmission lines are straight, directional, continuous, and vertical.
COLOR	Beige, tan, khaki, overall subtle; grey and dark brown boulders.	Grey, sage, dark green, and some reds near the major drainages.	Roads are tan, khaki, and monotone; transmission lines are dark brown, grey, and black.
TEXTURE	Smooth, fine, uniform, undulating, and continuous; dotted boulders.	Smooth to coarse, dotted, spotty, scattered, and dense.	Roads are fine, smooth, continuous, and directional; transmission lines are dotted, uniform, and coarse.

Narrative

SQRU 002 consists of undulating to rolling hills with scattered boulders that extend to the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The vegetation is primarily made up of short to moderate shrubs with dotted, tall pinyon-juniper trees. Single wood pole transmission lines cross this unit.

Scenic Quality Rating Score

	RATING	EXPLANATION OR RATIONALE
LANDFORM	2	Undulating to rolling hills make up the majority of landforms in the unit and few interesting features exist.
VEGETATION	3.5	The vegetation is predominantly made up of low grasses/shrubs, sagebrush, and pinyon-juniper trees, with some more diversity along the major drainages.
WATER	1	Very little water occurs in the unit and it is not a dominant feature.
COLOR	2.5	Some variety exists between the landforms and vegetation, particularly along the major drainages, but overall the unit lacks intense contrast.
ADJACENT SCENERY	5	The adjacent scenery of the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the west, most notably Mount Whitney (the tallest peak in the lower 48 States), and the Southern Inyo Mountains to the east, greatly enhances the visual quality of the unit.
SCARCITY	2	The landscape has some distinctiveness, but is fairly common within the region overall.
CULTURAL MODIFICATION	0	Cultural modifications associated with roads and transmission lines do not detract from or add to the visual quality.
TOTAL	**16**	**SCENIC QUALITY RATING = B**

Photos

IOP #004

IOP #005

IOP #006

Scenic Quality Rating Unit # 003 | Rounded Rocks

Date: 4/6/2021 | Field Office: Bishop, ID | Evaluators: D. Simpson-Colebank, D. George-Sills, L. Primosch, S. Lisius, S. Coffman, M. Oliver, M. Buhler, E. Lane, D. Kirk,G. Hall

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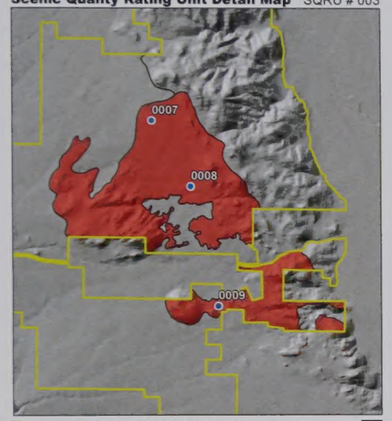
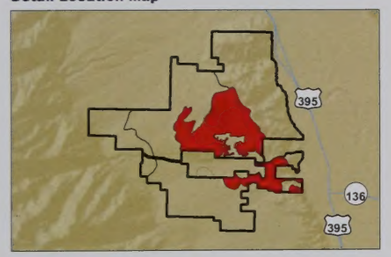
SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY

Scenic Quality Rating Unit Detail Map SQRU # 003



Detail Location Map



Landscape Character *(Feature)*

	LANDFORM/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURE
FORM	Bold, prominent, rugged, jagged, rounded, complex, amorphous, spherical, and nondirectional.	Short, indistinct, irregular, spherical, horizontal, and nondirectional shrubs.	Roads are flat, curving, directional, and horizontal.
LINE	Complex, broken, convex, curvilinear, geometric, irregular, converging and diverging.	Weak, irregular, discontinuous, and broken.	Roads are simple, curving, continuous, horizontal, smooth.
COLOR	Tan, khaki, browns, dark grey to black, subtle, monotone, and harmonious.	Grey, brown, muted, subtle, and monotone.	Roads are tan, khaki, and monotone.
TEXTURE	Coarse, random, patchy, rough, clumped, and granular.	Medium, patchy, scattered, and sparse.	Roads are fine, smooth, continuous, and directional.

Narrative

SQRU 003 consists of the iconic landforms found in the NSA, which are made up of exposed rock and boulders in interesting and unique forms. The vegetation is a weak visual element, made up of low, indistinct grasses and shrubs. Roads are common and lead to the many dispersed campsites and recreational areas in the core area of the NSA.

Scenic Quality Rating Score

	RATING	EXPLANATION OR RATIONALE
LANDFORM	4.5	The exposed and broken rock and flowing boulder landforms are highly varied in size and shape, dominant in the landscape, and intriguing.
VEGETATION	1	Little to no variation in vegetation exists in this unit and lacks it interest.
WATER	0	No water present or visible.
COLOR	2	Color variations and contrast in color between landform and vegetation with the exception of the isolated riparian vegetation which adds strong contrast where present.
ADJACENT SCENERY	5	The adjacent scenery of the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the west, most notably Mount Whitney (the tallest peak in the lower 48 States), and the Southern Inyo Mountains to the east, greatly enhances the visual quality of the unit.
SCARCITY	3.5	While similar landscapes exist in the region, this unit is distinctive and interesting, particularly in its geographic setting.
CULTURAL MODIFICATION	0	Cultural modifications associated with roads and dispersed campsites do not detract from or add to the visual quality.
TOTAL	**16**	**SCENIC QUALITY RATING = B**

Photos

IOP #007

IOP #008

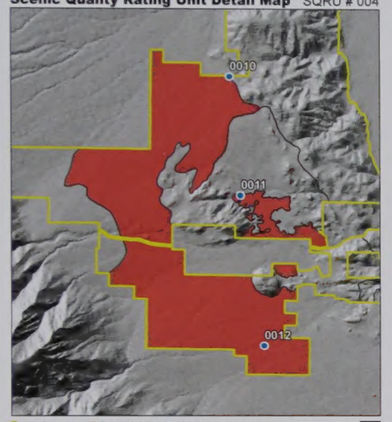
IOP #009

Scenic Quality Rating Unit # 004 | Movie Flat

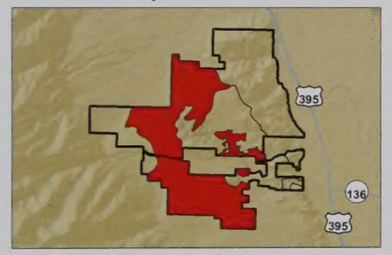
Date: 4/6/2021 | Field Office: Bishop, ID | Evaluators: D. Simpson-Colebank, D. George-Sills, L. Primosch, S. Lisius, S. Coffman, M. Oliver, M. Buhler, E. Lane, D. Kirk,G. Hall

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY

Scenic Quality Rating Unit Detail Map SQRU # 004



Detail Location Map



Landscape Character *(Feature)*

	LANDFORM/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURE
FORM	Smooth and flat to rolling and undulating, curving, gentle, and nondirectional to directional.	Short, curving, nondirectional, and regular shrubs.	Roads are flat, curving, directional, and horizontal; transmission lines are regular, tall, vertical, repetitive, and simple.
LINE	Soft, curving, horizontal, continuous, and flowing.	Continuous, simple, weak, horizontal, and flowing.	Roads are simple, curving, continuous, horizontal, smooth; transmission lines are straight, directional, continuous, and vertical.
COLOR	Tan, khaki, brown, subtle, and dull, and monotone.	Grey, khaki, dull, subtle, and monotone.	Roads are tan, khaki, and monotone; transmission lines are dark brown, grey, and black.
TEXTURE	Smooth, subtle, and continuous.	Uniform, continuous, medium, and scattered.	Roads are fine, smooth, continuous, and directional; transmission lines are dotted, uniform, and coarse.

Narrative

SQRU 004 consists of the flat to rolling landscape, lacking major landforms, and covered in low grasses and shrubs, which occurs across the entire NSA. Roads are ubiquitous in the core recreation areas, but are less common to nonexistent in the more remote portions of the NSA.

Scenic Quality Rating Score

	RATING	EXPLANATION OR RATIONALE
LANDFORM	1	Flat to rolling landscape with little to no topographic features.
VEGETATION	1.5	The vegetation in this unit consists predominantly of one major type and has little contrast.
WATER	2	Tuttle Creek flows through this unit but does not constitute a dominant visual feature.
COLOR	1.5	The colors in the unit are relatively dull and predominantly monotone.
ADJACENT SCENERY	5	The adjacent scenery of the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the west, most notably Mount Whitney (the tallest peak in the lower 48 States), and the Southern Inyo Mountains to the east, greatly enhances the visual quality of the unit.
SCARCITY	1.5	The landscape is very common within the region and lacks interesting features.
CULTURAL MODIFICATION	-0.5	The extent of the network of roads that exist in this unit detracts slightly from the visual quality.
TOTAL	**12**	**SCENIC QUALITY RATING = B**

Photos

IOP #010

IOP #011

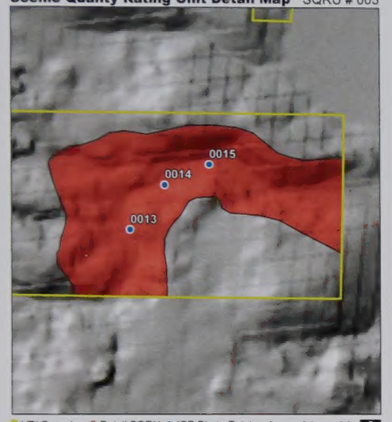
IOP #012

Scenic Quality Rating Unit # 005 | Tuttle Creek Canyon

Date: 4/6/2021 | Field Office: Bishop, ID | Evaluators: D. Simpson-Colebank, D. George-Sills, L. Primosch, D. Kirk

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SCENIC QUALITY FIELD INVENTORY

Scenic Quality Rating Unit Detail Map SQRU # 005



Detail Location Map

Landscape Character *(Feature)*

	LANDFORM/WATER	VEGETATION	STRUCTURE
FORM	Bold, prominent, rugged, jagged, rounded, complex, amorphous, spherical, and nondirectional.	Short, rounded shrubs; tall, vertical, broad, riparian brush and trees (Cottonwood, Willow, Tamarisk).	Roads are flat, curving, directional, and horizontal.
LINE	Complex, broken, convex, curvilinear, geometric, irregular, converging and diverging.	Weak, irregular, and simple; directional, linear, meandering, and clumped along riparian corridor.	Roads are simple, curving, continuous, horizontal, smooth.
COLOR	Tan, khaki, browns, dark grey to black, subtle, monotone, and harmonious.	Grey, tan, brown, and subtle; bright green riparian vegetation.	Roads are grey, black, and monotone.
TEXTURE	Coarse, random, patchy, rough, clumped, and granular.	Smooth to stippled; riparian vegetations is dense, matted, continuous, and directional.	Roads are fine, smooth, continuous, and directional.

Narrative

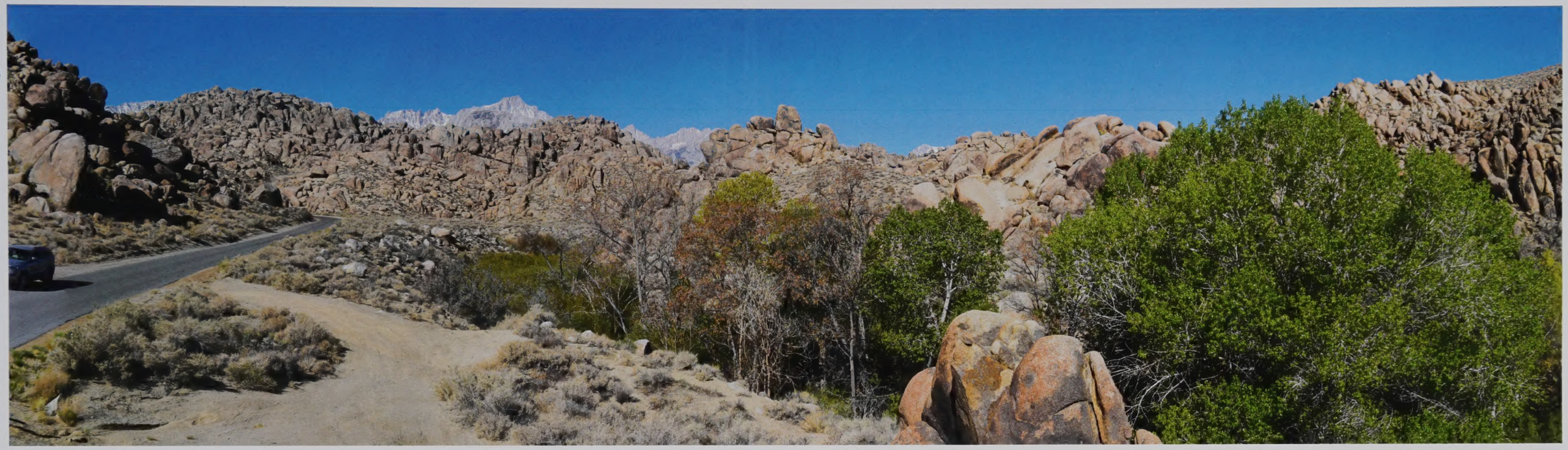
SQRU 005 consists of the broken, jagged, and exposed rock and boulder landforms which rise up on either side of Tuttle Creek, a perennial stream. The vegetation is a strong visual element, made up of a bright green swatch of riparian vegetation. The only cultural modification is the narrow asphalt road which runs parallel to Tuttle Creek.

Scenic Quality Rating Score

	RATING	EXPLANATION OR RATIONALE
LANDFORM	4	The exposed and broken rock and flowing boulder landforms are highly varied in size and shape, dominant in the landscape, and intriguing.
VEGETATION	4.5	The vegetation is predominantly made up of low grasses/shrubs as well as dense riparian vegetation and trees along Tuttle Creek, which combine to create a variety of interesting forms, sizes, textures, and patterns.
WATER	3	Tuttle Creek flows year-round, and while it is not a dominant visual element, it adds significant visual variety.
COLOR	3	There is strong color contrast between the riparian vegetation and landforms.
ADJACENT SCENERY	5	The adjacent scenery of the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the west, most notably Mount Whitney (the tallest peak in the lower 48 States), and the Southern Inyo Mountains to the east, greatly enhances the visual quality of the unit.
SCARCITY	3.5	While similar landscapes exist in the region, this unit is distinctive and interesting, particularly in its geographic setting.
CULTURAL MODIFICATION	0	Cultural modifications associated with roads do not detract from or add to the visual quality.
TOTAL	**23**	**SCENIC QUALITY RATING = A**

Photos

IOP #013



IOP #014

IOP #015

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Appendix B — Sensitivity Level Rating Unit Evaluations

APPENDIX B:
Sensitivity Level Rating Unit Evaluations

SLRU Process

The evaluation of sensitivity levels in the VRI process provides an indication of the public's concern for the visual environment. For a detailed description of the SLRU delineation and rating process, see Section 5.0 of this VRI report.

Sensitivity Rating Evaluation Forms

The following sensitivity evaluation rating forms reflect the information gathered from BLM staff, along with information gathered through agency and community coordination. These forms include both the overall rating and narratives required in the geodatabase for each unit.

Sensitivity Level Ratings by Sensitivity Level Rating Unit

SLRU # 001
Name: Recreational Areas

Date: 1/12/2021

Field Office: Bishop

Evaluators: D. George-Sills, D. Simpson-Colebank

Unit Narrative: SLRU 001 includes the areas of the NSA that are well known for their recreational opportunities and experiences including camping, hiking, biking, climbing, and OHV use. This unit includes the most visited areas in the NSA, resulting in high sensitivity.

	RATING	EXPLANATION
Type Of Use	High	Local, regional, national, and international visitors participating in multiple dispersed and developed recreational activities
Amount Of Use	High	High numbers of users (approximately 61,000 vehicles and 150,000 people in 2019) due to the variety of recreational opportunities and experiences in this area of NSA.
Public Interest	High	Significant natural landmarks and historical features within the NSA that people visit specifically to view and enjoy the recreational opportunities, including the Arch Loop Trailhead, Movie Flat Road, and popular climbing routes.
Adjacent Land Uses	Moderate	Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Inyo National Forest, and residential development on privately-owned lands.
Special Areas	Moderate	The major natural and historical attractions within the NSA are all included in this unit.
Other Factors	High	This unit includes Movie Flat Road, which includes a collection of viewing locations for over 400 famous historic and contemporary film scenes.
Overall Unit	High	The volume of use in this SLRU is the highest in the NSA, coupled with the panoramic backdrop of the Sierra Nevada and Inyo mountain ranges, results in a high level of sensitivity.

Sensitivity Level Ratings by Sensitivity Level Rating Unit *(continues)*

SLRU # 002
Name: Open Space

Date: 1/12/2021

Field Office: Bishop

Evaluators: D. George-Sills, D. Simpson-Colebank

Unit Narrative: SLRU 002 includes the areas in the NSA for dispersed recreation opportunities. The unit is flat, open, relatively remote, and lacks notable landmarks and natural features that would attract the public.

	RATING	EXPLANATION
Type Of Use	Low	Background views when travelling in and across other units.
Amount Of Use	Low	Low, mostly associated with recreation.
Public Interest	Low	Low due to the remote nature of unit.
Adjacent Land Uses	Moderate	Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Inyo National Forest, and residential development on privately-owned lands.
Special Areas	N/A	N/A
Other Factors	N/A	N/A
Overall Unit	Low	Visitors to the NSA predominantly view this unit as they travel in and across other units. Due to the remote nature of the unit and low public use, sensitivity to visual change is low.

SLRU # 003
Name: Geologic Features

Date: 1/12/2021

Field Office: Bishop

Evaluators: D. George-Sills, D. Simpson-Colebank

Unit Narrative: SLRU 003 includes the Alabama Hills themselves, as well as other major geologic landforms in the NSA that are outside SLRU 001. This unit has the greatest topographical variety and the visibility of the landforms increases sensitivity.

	RATING	EXPLANATION
Type Of Use	Moderate	Local, regional, national, and international recreational visitors.
Amount Of Use	Moderate	Limited access and topography reduces the number of users to moderate levels.
Public Interest	High	Nationally famous geologic formations within the NSA that people visit specifically to view and enjoy the natural landscape features.
Adjacent Land Uses	Moderate	Inyo National Forest and residential development on privately-owned lands.
Special Areas	High	The Alabama Hills, the namesake of the NSA, are included in this unit.
Other Factors	N/A	N/A
Overall Unit	Moderate	Local, regional, national, and international users utilize this unit for recreational activities and experiences. Due to limited access and topography, this unit is moderately used but the importance of the views of this unit increase the sensitivity.

Appendix C — Distance Zone Input

APPENDIX C:
Distance Zone Input

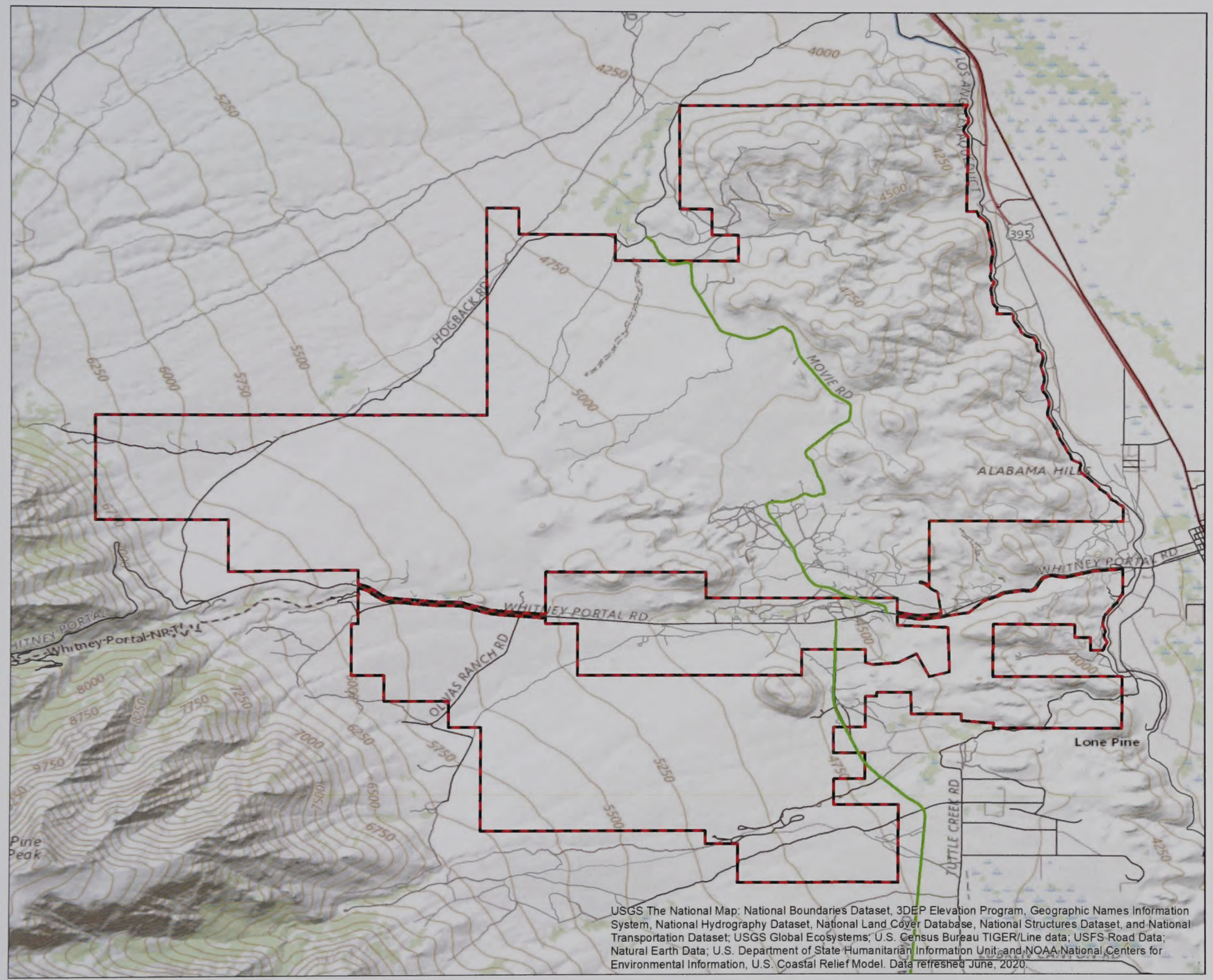
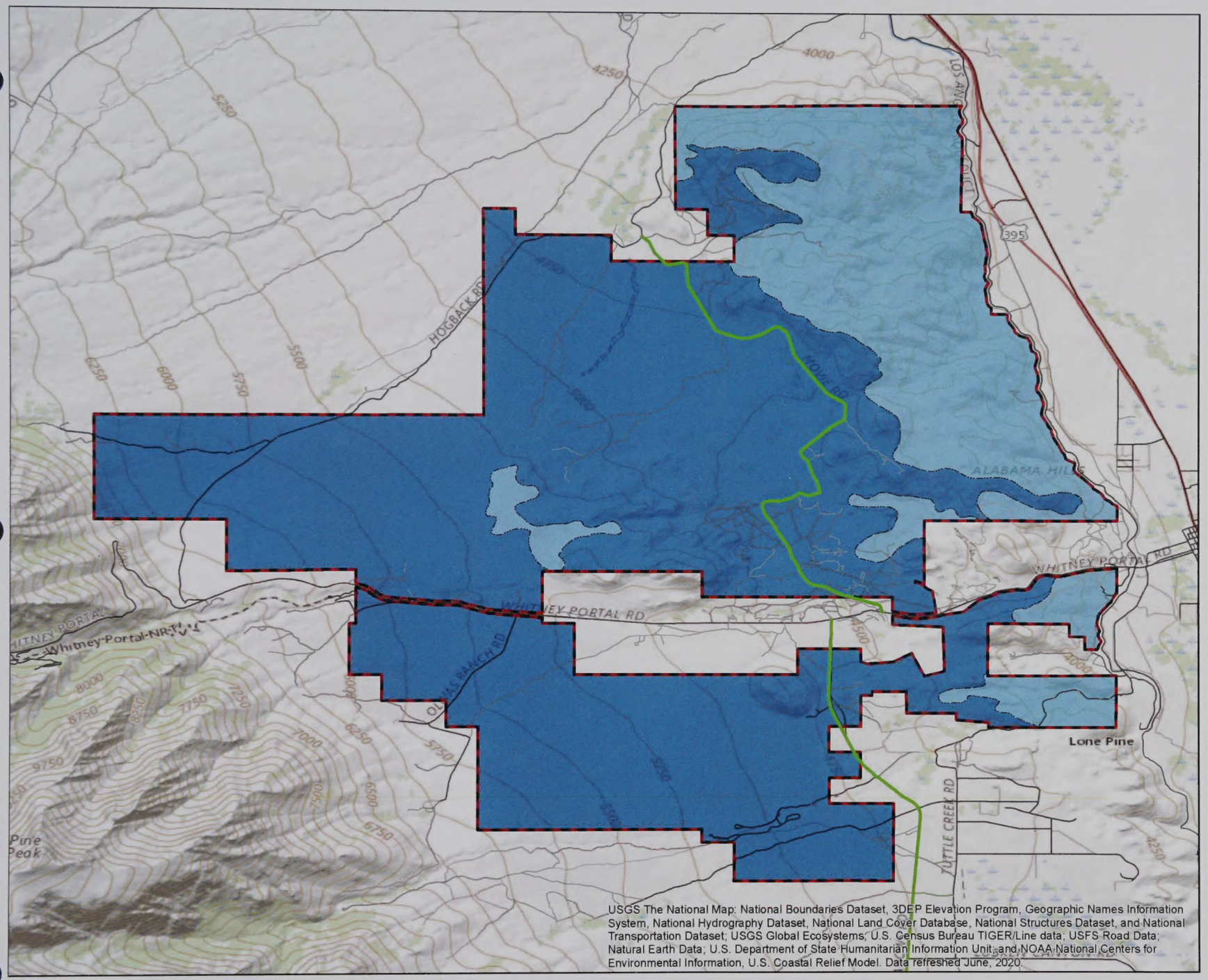

Key
VRI Boundary
Alabama Hills National Scenic Area Boundary
Visual Distance Zone Platform Road
HOGBACK RD
MOVIE RD
ALABAMA HILLS
WHITNEY PORTAL RD
OLIVAS RANCH RD
TUTTLE CREEK RD
Lone Pine
Whitney-Portal-NRT
Pine Peak
395
USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset, 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line data; USFS Road Data; Natural Earth Data; U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit; and NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, U.S. Coastal Relief Model. Data refreshed June, 2020.
NORTH
0
1
2
Miles

Figure C1: Visual Distance Zone Platforms


HOGBACK RD
MOVIE RD
WHITNEY PORTAL RD
Whitney-Portal-NRT
DIAS RANCH RD
TUTTLE CREEK RD
Lone Pine
Pine Peak
ALABAMA HILLS
395
USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset, 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line data; USFS Road Data; Natural Earth Data; U.S. Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit; and NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, U.S. Coastal Relief Model. Data refreshed June, 2020.

Visual Distance Zone Classification
Alabama Hills National Scenic Area

Visual Distance Zone Boundary
Visual Distance Zone Platform Road
Alabama Hills National Scenic Area Boundary

Administrative Boundaries	Acres	% of Total Acres w/in VRI Boundary	% of BLM Acres w/in VRI Boundary
Visual Resource Inventory Boundary	18,829	100%	
VRI Boundary Non-BLM Acres	93	<1%	
VRI Boundary BLM Acres	18,736	99%	100%
Visual Resource Inventory			
Total Area Inventoried	18,829	100%	100%
Foreground/Middleground	14,145	75%	75%
Background	0	0%	0%
Seldom Seen	4,591	25%	25%

NORTH
0 1 2
Miles

Figure C2: Visual Distance Zones Rating Report Map

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Appendix D — Photo Log

APPENDIX D:
Photo Log

Table 5. Photo Log

SQRU NUMBER	IOP/POP	FINAL IOP NUMBER	PHOTO FOLDER IN ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD	FIRST PHOTO DIRECTION	FIRST PHOTO	LAST PHOTO	PHOTOS USED FOR PANORAMA
004	IOP		DSLR/IOP1	N	64	71	
004	IOP		DSLR/IOP2	N	72	80	
004	IOP		DSLR/IOP3	N	81	89	
004	IOP	0011	DSLR/IOP4	N	90	97	93-95
003	IOP	0008	DSLR/IOP5	N	101	109	106-108
003	IOP	0007	DSLR/IOP6	N	110	117	113-115
004	IOP	0010	DSLR/IOP7	N	118	125	122-124
001	IOP		DSLR/IOP8	N	126	133	
002	IOP	0004	DSLR/IOP9	N	134	141	134, 140-141
002	IOP	0005	DSLR/IOP10	N	151	158	152-154
002	IOP	0006	DSLR/IOP11	N	159	166	159-161
004	IOP		DSLR/IOP12	N	167	174	
003	IOP	0009	DSLR/IOP13	N	175	181	179-181
004	IOP	0012	DSLR/IOP14	N	182	189	182-184
005	IOP	0014	DSLR/IOP15	N	190	197	195-197
001	IOP	0003	DSLR/IOP16	N	198	204	202-204
001	IOP	0002	DSLR/IOP17	N	205	211	209-211
001	IOP	0001	DSLR/IOP18	N	212	218	214-216
005	IOP		DSLR/IOP19	N	224	231	
005	IOP	0015	DSLR/IOP20	N	232	238	236-238
005	IOP	0013	DSLR/IOP21	N	239	245	243-245

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Appendix E — Physiographic Province Map and Scenic Quality Calibration Photos by Province

APPENDIX E:
Physiographic Province Map and Scenic Quality Calibration Photos by Province

Basin and Range Project Area Photographs for Calibration of Scenic Quality Elements

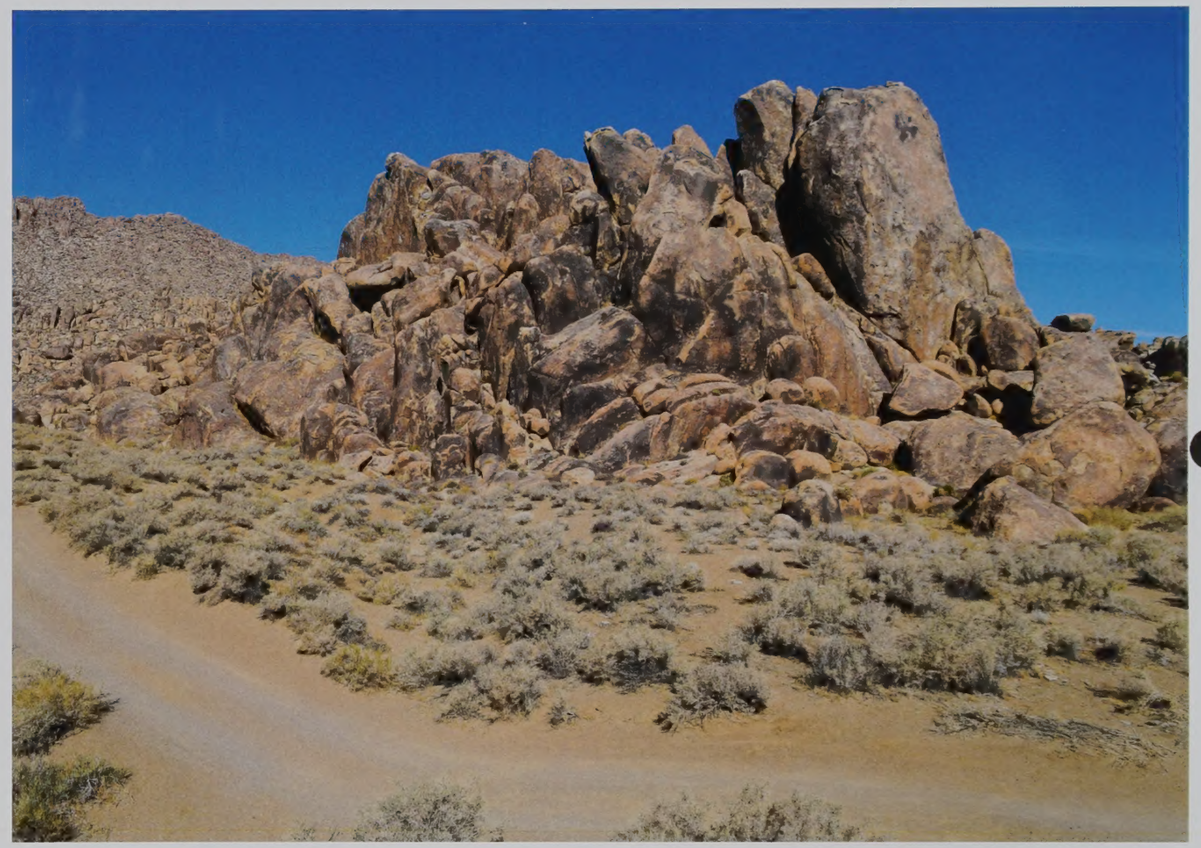
The following photos are examples depicting the lowest and highest ratings for each scenic quality factor; this range is used to demonstrate the variety of landscapes found in the Basin and Range and Colorado Plateau provinces within the inventory boundary.

Figure E1: Physiographic Provinces Map

LANDFORM

Location: **Movie Flat (#004)**

Score: **1.0**



Location: **Rounded Rocks (#003)**

Score: **4.5**

VEGETATION

Location: **Alabama Hills (#001)**

Score: **1.0**

Location: **Tuttle Creek Canyon (#005)**

Score: **4.5**

WATER

Location: **Alabama Hills (#001)**

Score: **0.0**

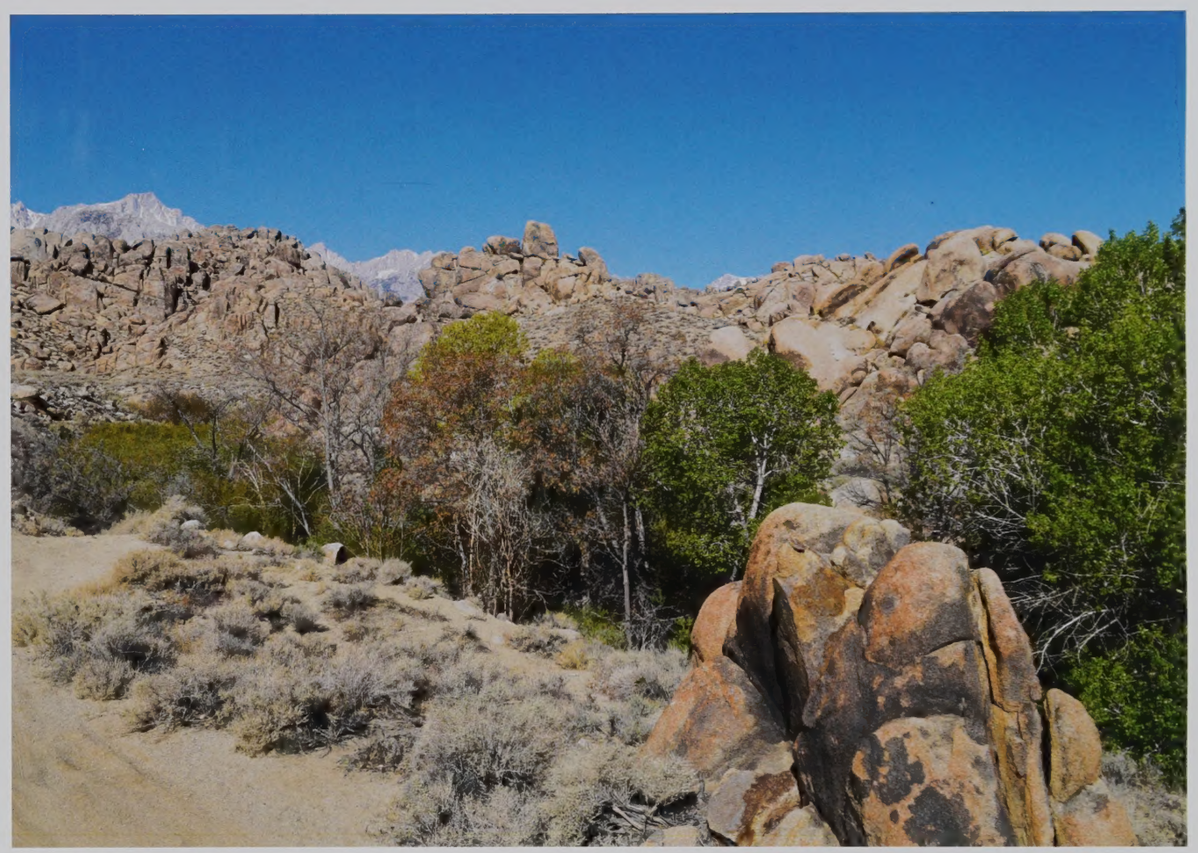
Location: **Tuttle Creek Canyon (#005)**

Score: **3.0**

COLOR

Location: **Movie Flat (#004)**

Score: **1.5**



Location: **Tuttle Creek Canyon (#005)**

Score: **3.0**

INFLUENCE OF ADJACENT SCENERY

Location: **Rounded Rocks (#003)**

Score: **5.0**

(All five units received a score of 5.0 for the Influence of Adjacent Scenery)

SCARCITY

Location: **Alabama Hills (#001)**

Score: **1.5**

Location: **Rounded Rocks (#003)**

Score: **3.5**

CULTURAL MODIFICATIONS

Location: **Movie Flat (#004)**

Score: **-0.5**

(The network of existing roads resulted in the -0.5 rating)

Location: **Alabama Hills (#001)**

Score: **0.5**

Appendix F — Process Record

APPENDIX F:
Process Record

VRI Process Record

The following developments occurred during this VRI process and represent the progression of the inventory efforts:

- Project awarded to Logan Simpson on September 14, 2020
- Initial project kickoff conference call held on September 30, 2020
- Virtual VRI training workshop January 20, 2021
- Fieldwork completed on April 6-7, 2021
- Draft SQRUs, SLRUs, and VDZs sent to BLM for review on May 3, 2021
- Draft VRI Classes sent to BLM for review on June 7, 2021
- Revised VRI Classes sent to BLM for review on July 14, 2021
- Draft VRI Report distributed to BLM for review on August 23, 2021
- Final Draft VRI Report and geodatabase distributed to BLM for review on September 7, 2021
- Final VRI Report and geodatabase distributed to BLM on November 1, 2021

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